

Final Report: Response and Recovery Funding

A Report for the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE)

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WOMEN'S
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Introduction

Between 2021 and 2024, WAGE allocated \$85,548,062 of COVID-19 Response & Recovery Funding for violence against women (VAW) shelters/transition houses (TH) across the country, excluding those in Quebec and those funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). Women’s Shelters Canada (WSC) was contracted by WAGE to deliver these funds to those shelters across Canada, including an administrative fee. This final report summarizes how that funding was spent.

In total, \$83,427,189 of new funds were sent to VAW shelters, transition houses, and provincial associations. **The total amount of funds reported on was \$86,001,865.02**, the difference being unspent funds from the 2020 COVID-19 Emergency Funding that were already with organizations and were allowed to be reallocated as Response & Recovery funding.

The reports for funding recipients were due on October 30, 2023, unless shelters were offered extensions to spend unspent funds, in which case reports were due by March 31, 2024. Any errors or changes after June 24, 2024, are not included in this final report. Given that there are no outstanding reports, we do not anticipate any changes or amendments to this final report.

All percentages are rounded up. Some quotes are lightly edited for spelling and grammar.

Summary

In total, **314 organizations completed the COVID-19 Response & Recovery Funding Final Report**. Figure 1 and Table 1 show the number of respondents from each province and territory. There are no respondents from Quebec as that funding bucket was delivered by the Quebec government, not WSC. Shelters funded by ISC also received their funding outside of WSC.

Figure 1: Map of All Respondents

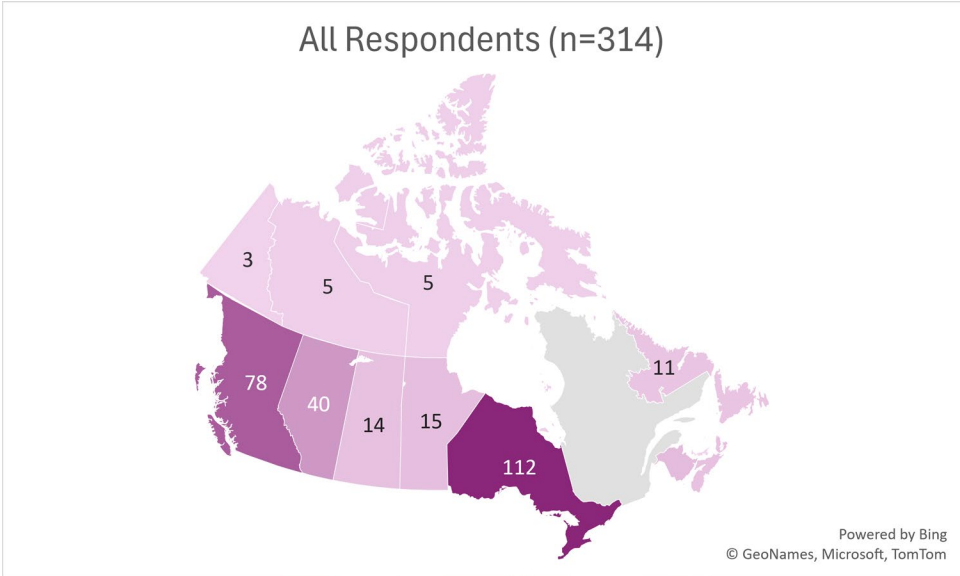


Table 1: All Respondents by Province/Territory

Alberta	40
British Columbia	78
Manitoba	15
New Brunswick	17
Newfoundland and Labrador	11
Northwest Territories	5
Nova Scotia	13
Nunavut	5
Ontario	112
Prince Edward Island	1
Saskatchewan	14
Yukon	3
Total	314

Number of People Served

The total number of individuals (service users) who were **directly supported by the funding was 663,730**. The average number of individuals served was 2,114. The total number of individuals who were **indirectly served by this funding was 1,214,613**. Despite reaching such a high number of people, there were also **137,129 individuals turned away** from service and/or residency.

Project Types

There were three different funding types that organizations undertook. These included individual shelter organization funds, collaborative projects, and provincial association projects. Collaborative projects included more than one organization, with the highest number including 12 partnered organizations.

Table 2: All Projects by Type

Individual Shelter Organization Funding	298
Collaborative Project	6
Provincial Project	10
Total	314

Individual Shelter Funding

WSC provided funding to 298 shelter organizations for a total of \$84,057,503.02 to be reported on.

Nine shelter organizations chose not to register for any funds. Ten shelter organizations returned unspent funds for a total of \$319,468.63. Some of this was re-distributed to other shelter organizations and the rest will be returned to WAGE.

The money spent was used to cover a wide range of operational, programmatic, and capital costs. Figure 2 and Table 3 show the number of respondents from each province and territory. Shelters from across the country applied for and received this funding with the exception of Quebec and ISC-funded shelters/THs. While we heard many things from funded organizations, there were two critical messages that were shared: (1) this funding was essential, supporting the maintenance of shelter services and the ability to remain open during a crisis. Organizations are deeply appreciative of this funding. (2)

Organizations are concerned about the end of this funding and want WAGE to know that operational, capital, and unrestricted funds are critical to their continued operations.

Figure 2: Map of Individual Shelter Organization Respondents



Table 3: Individual Shelter Organization Respondents by Province/Territory

Alberta	39
British Columbia	75
Manitoba	14
New Brunswick	15
Newfoundland and Labrador	10
Northwest Territories	4
Nova Scotia	12
Nunavut	5
Ontario	107
Prince Edward Island	1
Saskatchewan	13
Yukon	3
Total	298

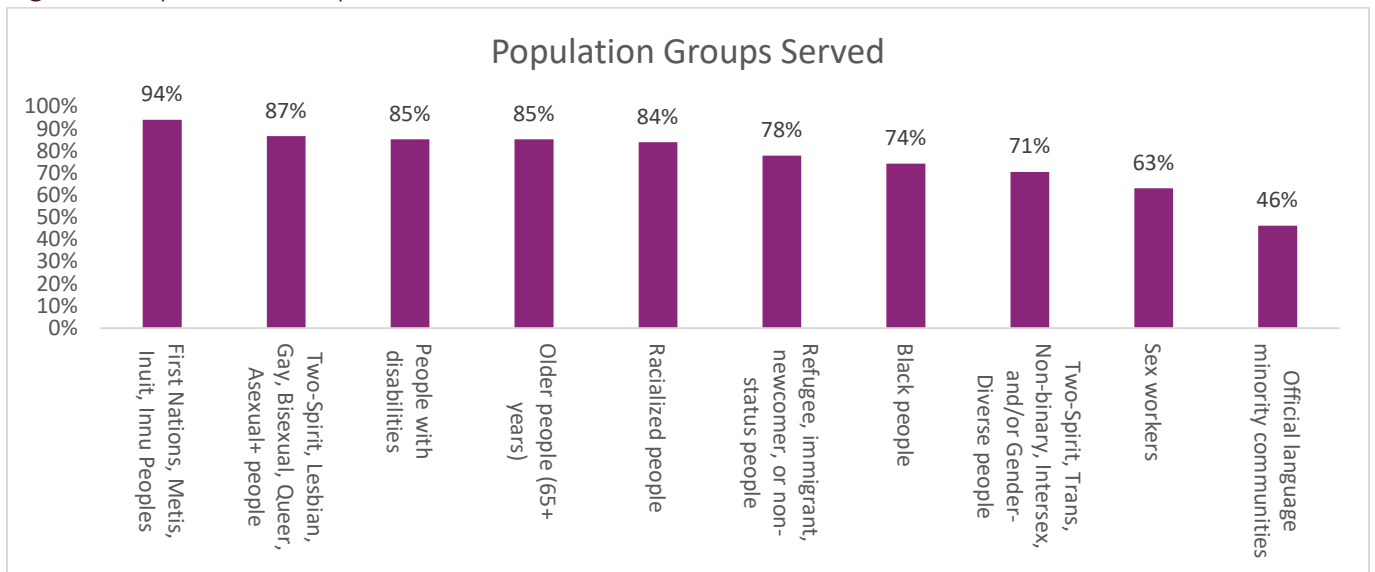
Who Was Served

The total number of individuals (service users) **directly supported by the funding to shelter organizations was 662,300**. The average number of individuals served was 2,222. The total number of individuals who were **indirectly served was 1,170,216**. The average number of indirectly served individuals was 7,454. Despite reaching such a high number of individuals, **there were also 135,686 individuals turned away** for service and/or residency among 184 of the shelter/TH organizations. The average number of individuals turned away was 737 (n=184). This high turnaway rate speaks to the

increased demand that shelters/THs are seeing as a result of escalating rates and severity of violence.¹ Further, the housing crisis is contributing to a bottleneck in shelters, where new residents cannot enter as existing residents are unable to find adequate and affordable housing options. Both conditions are contributing to rising runaway numbers, which are not decreasing with the end of COVID funding.

Shelters/THs serve a range of individuals. Figure 3 shows the rates at which shelters indicated that they serve marginalized or under-supported populations.

Figure 3: Population Groups Served



How Funds Were Spent

Figure 4 shows how many organizations spent within each funding category. **Nearly every organization funded indicated that they allocated funding toward staffing. The total amount allocated was \$40.5 million, or nearly half of all allocated funds.** Based on our Feminist Brain Drain Study², we know that organizations are facing a labour crisis. Shelters/THs find recruitment and retention of staff difficult due to under-resourcing, which contributes to salaries and benefits not being competitive. We frequently heard these types of issues among responses in these funding reports. While organizations were able to address some of these challenges through increased staffing, wage supplements, double staffing, and increased health and wellness benefits, for many these will cease with the conclusion of this funding. Among the most frequently cited positions being added to organizations were:

- Administrative supports;
- Cooks, housekeepers, and maintenance staff; and
- Outreach workers.

¹ Canadian Women's Foundation et al. (2020) Resetting Normal: Systemic Gender-based Violence and the Pandemic. Montreal, QC: Canadian Women's Foundation. https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-08-CWF-ResettingNormal-Report3_v5.pdf.

² Hoogendam, R & Maki, K. (2024) Feminist Brain Drain: Labour Issues and Worker Wellness in the VAW Shelter Sector. Ottawa, ON: Women's Shelters Canada. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FBD-Final-Report.pdf>.

“We had the majority of our core staff leave within the last 3 years – citing burnout and fatigue during and following the pandemic. The funding from Women's Shelters Canada allowed us to search for, train, and develop a new team.”

“As an Executive Director managing a VAW shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic, without this funding the doors would have been shut. There is no possible way that we could have operated without this critical support. For the first time in its 39-year history, we had adequate staffing on day shifts.”

The next most popular areas of spending were technology and operations and facilities, followed by materials and supplies, capital, and transportation. Technology was a critical resource to invest in during lockdowns, as it allowed organizations to remain connected to clients, both residents and non-residents. Organizations upgraded technology including hardware for both clients and staff and made improvements to software, including programs to improve staff collaboration and client outreach (e.g. Microsoft Teams and Zoom). In addition, organizations invested in their crisis lines and security systems. Operations and facilities funds were allocated to areas like utilities and groceries, which both have been significantly affected by inflation.

“Most importantly, this grant allowed us to concentrate on our work of supporting women and children fleeing domestic violence, rather than on securing funding to provide these essential services.”

All the top areas where funding was allocated **are areas that have been underfunded in this sector for a long time**. Organizations were deeply appreciative to have funding that allowed them to invest in building maintenance, staffing supports, and organizational necessities. This funding provided shelters space to breathe and invest in long-needed areas.

“We have found offering a cared for unit, that is attractive and appealing gifts [for] the family with the perception of being cared for and allows them during a difficult and humbling situation the opportunity to experience respect and dignity. This helps build an ethos of care and consideration which in turn makes room for a perception of safety. Once we have this our clients are in a place where they can begin the work of healing from their trauma.”

Figure 4: Funding Distribution by Category

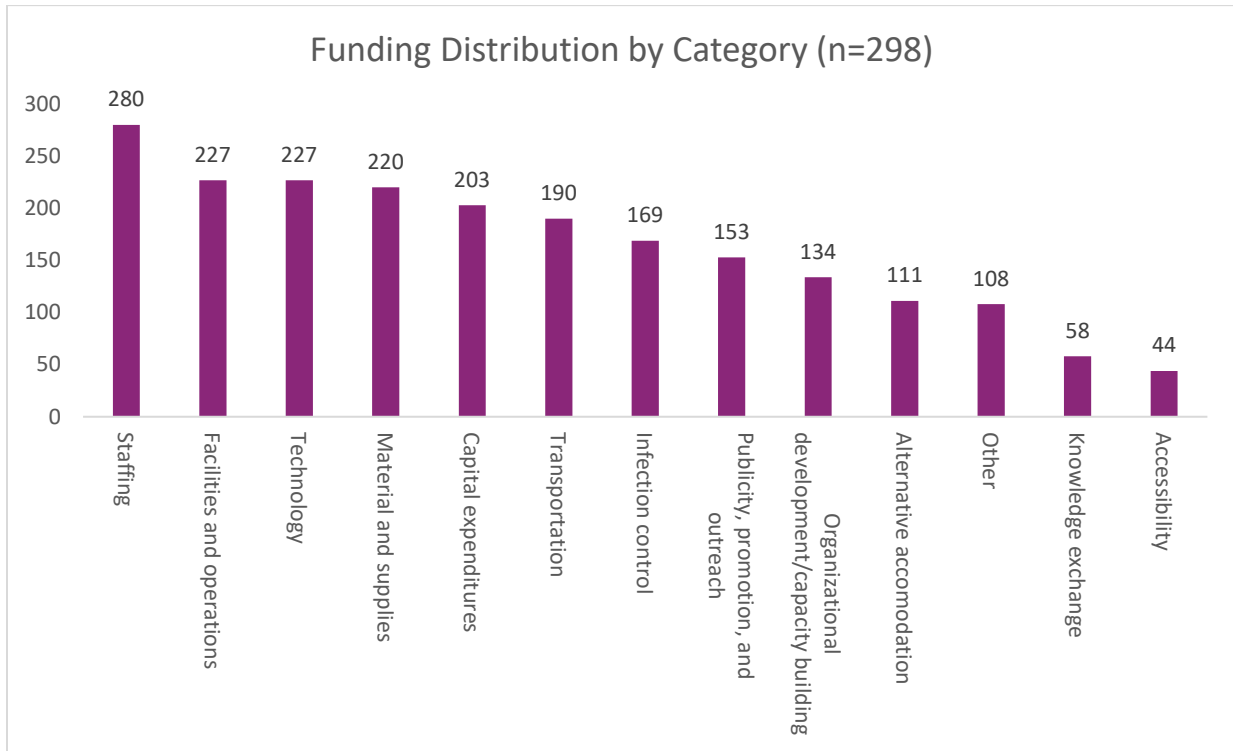


Table 4: What the Recovery Funding was Spent On

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Range	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total amount to report on	298	799,323.00	800,000.00	84,057,503.02	282,072.16	156,411.01
Staffing	298	641,780.99	641,780.99	40,583,427.65	136,186.00	113,683.48
Alternative accommodation	298	150,000.00	150,000.00	1,807,913.40	6,066.82	18,301.04
Material and supplies	297	148,735.66	148,735.66	4,113,305.92	13,849.51	19,583.48
Transportation	298	62,847.13	62,847.13	1,239,373.57	4,158.97	8,155.27
Infection control	297	149,135.00	149,135.00	1,920,611.78	6,466.71	15,140.61
Facilities and Operations	297	359,693.00	359,693.00	8,796,262.51	29,617.05	48,982.29
Capital Expenditures	298	350,000.00	350,000.00	14,146,859.96	47,472.68	69,187.43
Technology	298	88,794.99	88,794.99	3,133,711.99	10,515.81	14,736.14
Knowledge exchange	297	81,320.07	81,320.07	451,780.39	1,521.15	6,340.83
Publicity, Promotion, and Outreach	296	74,476.22	74,476.22	1,653,893.64	5,587.48	11,489.78
Organization Development and Capacity Building	297	303,390.00	303,390.00	2,841,718.77	9,568.08	2,6181.42

Accessibility	296	25,000.00	25,000.00	189,346.83	639.69	2,781.21
Other	298	160,505.00	160,505.00	2,854,828.03	9,579.96	22,433.46

Unlike the first round of funding, organizations were permitted to allocate funding toward capital improvements. **Among those funded, 39% of organizations invested in capital projects.** As shown in our national study of VAW shelters,³ 80% of organizations’ buildings needed repairs, yet nearly half did not have the funds to undertake this work. The average age of buildings in that study was 45 years, which means that they require regular maintenance and investment to stay in a good state of repair, yet many funders do not fund this needed work. The top areas listed for capital investment included furniture and appliances, renovations, HVAC systems, and exterior/outside upgrades. Many replaced aging appliances and furniture, noting that existing furniture degraded quickly with constant infection control cleaning and therefore new materials that were more durable and easier to clean were needed. Renovations were undertaken, which included items like painting and room improvements. HVAC systems were not only a COVID response, but also needed to address rising summer temperatures. Outdoor improvements were wide-ranging, from doors and walkways to yards and garages.

“The cost of running our organization has increased throughout the pandemic and accessing funds to do other things such as renovations and repairs has become increasingly difficult to access. The ability to access these funds has had a major impact on the quality of the shelter and the home that we provide our residents. Our organization is very thankful for this opportunity.”

Funding Environment

As mentioned above, shelters/THs noted that staffing was the top area where funding was spent. This includes money allocated to new positions, increasing staff salaries, adding double staffing, providing more benefits, including more flexible sick/mental health time, and wellness activities and resources for staff. The largest areas of spending after staffing needs, included:

- Providing supplies for clients, including food, gas and gift cards, rental supplements, technology, and resources for children.
- Infection control items including masks, air purifiers, sanitizing supplies, partitions, and signage.
- The continuation of programming. Many indicated that without this funding, programming would have been reduced or cut, and that with the funding they were able to ensure supports continued.
- Technology including new devices for staff and clients, new software (e.g. Teams and Zoom), new systems like client management or donor management systems.

“Beyond keeping our doors open, which was our first priority, we were able to use some of these funds for organizational development. These are functions that do not typically have a funding source but are essential to a healthy organization. We were able to complete a strategic plan, human resources tools update and development, develop a wage grid and job classification system, and a fundraising strategy. Without these funds we likely would not have been able to accomplish these much needed projects.”

³ Maki, Krys. (2019) More Than a Bed: A National Profile of VAW Shelters and Transition Houses. Ottawa, ON: Women’s Shelters Canada. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/More-Than-a-Bed-Final-Report.pdf>.

“Overall, this funding has filled in the gaps and allowed us to add resources where we need it the most. Our largest spending, not surprisingly, was on staff salaries. Staff are our most important resource. They are the changemakers for those that we serve.”

“This funding was given at an exceptional time. The pandemic made the work much more difficult, and this funding allowed for a Kitchen Manager to be on site to prepare nutritious meals for our service users within the constrictions of COVID. It also allowed for our board to conduct strategic planning and board development, which is always needed, but never funded.”

This funding was an important resource for responding to and recovering from the pandemic. With more resources for staffing, organizations were better able to respond to increased rates of violence, cover for staff who were sick or isolating, and dedicate staff to pandemic responses including cleaning, keeping up with changing mandates, and ensuring shelter compliance. Several organizations noted that they had limited outbreaks of COVID in shelter, which were better controlled by having these resources on hand. The ability to access PPE and invest in health and safety, as well as investing in capital, renovations, and furniture, all contributed to a safer and more livable space during a difficult and scary time. In particular, the ability to add bathrooms and additional bedrooms allowed shelters to maintain spaces and keep residents separated as mandated. Additionally, new furniture or surfaces that were easy to clean and did not deteriorate saved staff time and prevented the spread of infection. Shelters/THs were also grateful to have the resources to invest in training for staff and new policies. Having these resources can contribute to long-term resilience to future pandemics, as well as preparing staff and the organization to better address areas like mental health concerns, addictions issues, and inclusivity and diversity.

Without these funds, the shelter/TH sector would have been devastated. Most recipients indicated that they would have been required to reduce their capacity, limit their services, and would not have been able to continue offering a high quality of service. Additionally, many also believed that without these funds they would have been forced to close their doors temporarily or permanently. The ability to support staff and hire more staff through these funds meant that retention levels were higher and staff wellbeing was better than they may have otherwise been. This also contributed to keeping shelters operating. The absence of this funding would have had a hugely negative impact on those attempting to flee violence.

While many organizations noted their reliance on these federal funds throughout the pandemic, **59% (n=297) indicated that they also received provincial/territorial funds to respond to the pandemic.**

While this funding allowed for expenses in many areas that are often not permitted through funding programs, and in fact many noted that there was nothing that they were not able to address, there are still gaps that organizations experienced. The primary concern that was raised was that the funding needs to be long-term and/or ongoing. While the funding was deeply appreciated, particularly as it did not come with the constraints of program funding, it still was time limited, and many organizations have already cut or reduced programming, positions, and activities that were brought in under this funding stream. A small number of people noted that the restrictions on purchasing a vehicle or property were problematic. Particularly for rural and more remote communities, transportation is a vital resource that is not readily available. Too often, responsibility for transporting clients falls on individual staff members using their own vehicles.

Given the long under-resourcing of the shelter sector, this funding was simply insufficient to address the backlog of organizational needs. While staff salaries could be increased during this period, these still could not be brought to a level where organizations could compete with other local organizations or government departments. Despite implementing retention incentives for staff, many noted that they continued to see high turnover during the pandemic. Further, as discussed above, many shelter buildings are aging and there has not been funding available to keep these in a good state of repair. While these funds addressed some of the needs for repairs and improvements, it simply was not enough to fulfill the backlog of projects. Given rising inflation, increased demand for services, and a history of under-resourcing, for many this funding allowed them to keep their doors open and continue to serve their community, but without a commitment to long-term funding, it simply could not address all their needs.

“These funds were not able to address the ongoing underfunding of women's shelters.”

“Sadly, this funding provided a short-term solution, but the long-term problem of underfunding in this sector still exists. Lurching from crisis to crisis, more work, and clients than you can get through, more problems and no time to find solutions, tiredness, hopelessness, and frantically trying to fundraise off the side of your desk, slowly erodes hope and joy from the staff. This is when despair, lateral violence, and eventually burnout and compassion fatigue take out good, caring, passionate staff.”

“These federal funds addressed all of our needs. The only aspect the federal funds were not able to address is continuous, annualized funding beyond Sept 30, 2023. An additional \$200,000 each year would allow our shelter to function at an optimal level of staffing and supports to address the needs of our community.”

Because of the issues raised above, as well as the downward trend in charitable giving,⁴ **85% of shelters are deeply concerned about the end of this funding.** Some have indicated that they will be forced to reduce or cut programs, layoff staff, run a deficit, and/or close their shelter doors without sufficient funding.

Satisfaction with the Funding

Despite raising concerns about funding gaps and the lack of ongoing funds, there was overwhelming appreciation for the funding. Among funded organizations, **80% felt that the funding was extremely effective**, while 20% felt that it was very effective. When asked about their experience working with WSC to apply for, receive, and report on the funding, recipients were overall very satisfied with their experience, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Satisfaction with the Funding Process⁵

	Extremely Positive	Somewhat Positive	Neither Positive or Negative	Somewhat Negative
Registering for Funds	89%	7%	3%	0%
Process to Receive Funds	92%	5%	3%	0%

⁴ CanadaHelps. (2024) The Giving Report 2024. From Disconnection to Collective Action. CanadaHelps.

⁵ With rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%.

Communicating with WSC	92%	6%	2%	<1%
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Shelters/THs expressed so much appreciation to both WSC and WAGE for these funds. Among their reasons for gratitude was a process that was simple, efficient, and did not overburden organizations; funding that was flexible; and funders who seemed like they understood and trusted those they were funding. Too often, funders ask for lengthy applications and reports that are not relevant for or useful to those accessing the funding or writing the reports. Recipients overall felt that this process was reasonable while still providing a level of accountability to government that they understand is a necessary part of the process.

“The funding process was excellent, easy to navigate and the application to apply for this funding was short and quick. It felt like the WSC trusted our requests.”

“We are extremely grateful for the funding! Thank you for making it an easier process than most funding opportunities. It leaves more time to do the work we are dedicated to doing.”

“I found the process to access funding and support at Women's Shelters Canada to be easily accessible with an expectation of accountability, and the staff working for the organization to be approachable, respectful, unassuming and very supportive.”

Many organizations expressed that funders do not understand their needs, nor feel like they are trusted to effectively spend their funds. With this funding, the ability to spend with limited restrictions made organizations feel like they had autonomy to make decisions. They also felt like their knowledge and expertise were trusted, as they were able to allocate the funding to areas that they identified as critical.

“Really appreciate the trust in organizations to use the funding as needed.”

“The flexibility of this type of operating funding is so incredibly helpful. It demonstrates that WAGE and WSC understand that maintaining high-quality existing services for survivors of violence is important and valuable. It also demonstrates trust in the non-profit and charitable sector to allocate funds responsibly, to where they are needed most. Thank you. We hope these types of trust-based funding opportunities are available in the future.”

“Our long history in communities is documented and our work is known, so it was very appreciated that we didn't have to spend time proving our worthiness for the funding.”

Finally, recipients appreciated the flexibility of the funding. Not only were the funds able to be used in a wide range of ways, including many that are often not permitted through other funders, but recipients also appreciated the flexibility that WSC staff offered through the process. Many noted that they received support with applications, received extensions to reports as needed, and had good communication with WSC staff.

“The hours and hours we spend trying to obtain funding at times is overwhelming. For the most part these funds are attached to a particular program/need and very rarely can you obtain funding for operational costs. For organizations to have the flexibility to determine where the funds were needed was simply amazing. There were so many times that things came up we could have never predicted

but because of the flexibility of funding we had the ability to address the need. We have said time and time again, we have lived for a short time in a period of ‘what if’ to ‘we can.’”

“Thank you for making this funding so flexible. A huge thank you to staff at Women's Shelters Canada for always being available to answer any questions regarding use of this funding. The process to apply for the funding was clear and the information sessions were very helpful. This report has been straight forward and clear to fill out.”

“The flexibility in how we were able to use this funding was just as important as the funding itself.”

Current Situation as a Result of the Funds

This funding not only supported organizations to respond to and recover from the pandemic, but has also supported them to become more resilient for the future as well. **More than half of funded shelters/THs created resources, policies, infrastructure, and capacity to better respond to future pandemics and other emergencies.** This is critical not only as COVID continues to have lasting impacts on organizations, but as organizations are facing more frequent climate disasters. Having emergency management and business continuity plans is becoming more important, and this was a major undertaking for many through this funding.

Many shelters/THs also invested in infrastructure for their buildings, including technology and capital enhancements. Both of these mean that the organizations and their physical spaces have more capacity to better serve those fleeing violence. Prior to this funding, many shelters had not expanded their services to text or virtual supports. With these funds to invest in technology, organizations are now able to serve more clients, particularly those who have limited access to shelters.

Shelters also invested in building staffing models that would extend past the funding period. These included creating HR plans, developing ongoing staff wellness strategies, and building greater staffing stabilization. While there are still many concerns about the future of staffing for the sector, many feel better prepared than they had pre-pandemic.

A final common area that was invested in was developing organizational policies and strategic plans. These set organizations up to better tackle issues as they occur, rather than acting reactively.

“I believe that we are now more prepared for future shocks, we are stronger as a team, we feel supported in our work, and we have re-developed updated emergency protocols.”

“During a pandemic or other type of extreme emergency, communications access is essential. The shelter was not prepared for that prior to the pandemic, but it is now thanks to the funding. The situation was serious as the former IT infrastructure had been cobbled together with no plan in the past. IT wiring was exposed on the floors, the control room had dead wiring with other systems built over top. It was causing internet-dependent safety equipment and communications to fail, exposing our shelter to safety breaches both in its physical perimeter by violent offenders and its ability to protect internal data, in addition to being unsafe for employees. In the event of another emergency, we now have strong systems and backup systems because the funding and its flexibility offered a solution to fund the correct experts to address the challenges faced.”

“We were able to hire a consultant to support us by updating our Policies and Procedures. Old policies were vintage. The urgency was having the pandemic response plan in place, and as the

mandates were lifted having the Infectious Disease Policy to follow. These policies and procedures are a living document and continue to be updated with current and new policies.”

Despite organizations being better prepared for future shocks, now that funding has ceased, **they are having to reduce or cut programming and services brought in through this COVID funding.** This includes reducing staff hours, laying staff off, and moving staff from new areas to core shelter functions. In addition, staff are also seeing the end of added staff benefits, COVID pay increases, professional development and training, and wellness benefits. With the loss of staff and staff supports, organizations anticipate difficulty retaining and recruiting employees. This could impact future levels and quality of service that can be offered to those fleeing violence.

“All benefits and wage top ups will now be stopped. Due to the already huge strain on the shelter from rising operational costs, we now will struggle to pay staff a fair wage. The ability to find staff that are trained and reliable will not be an option due to the wage offered. The women who work in the shelter don't do it for the money, they do it because of passion. Yet, one needs to be able to feed their families and be able to live.”

Not only are staff positions being reduced but programming, both new and pre-existing, is also being reduced or cut. Without added funding supports, organizations are unable to carry out all the programming that was being offered during the funding period. Many also noted that they needed to reduce the supplies and resources that are offered to clients including groceries, gift cards, rental supplements, and tech devices.

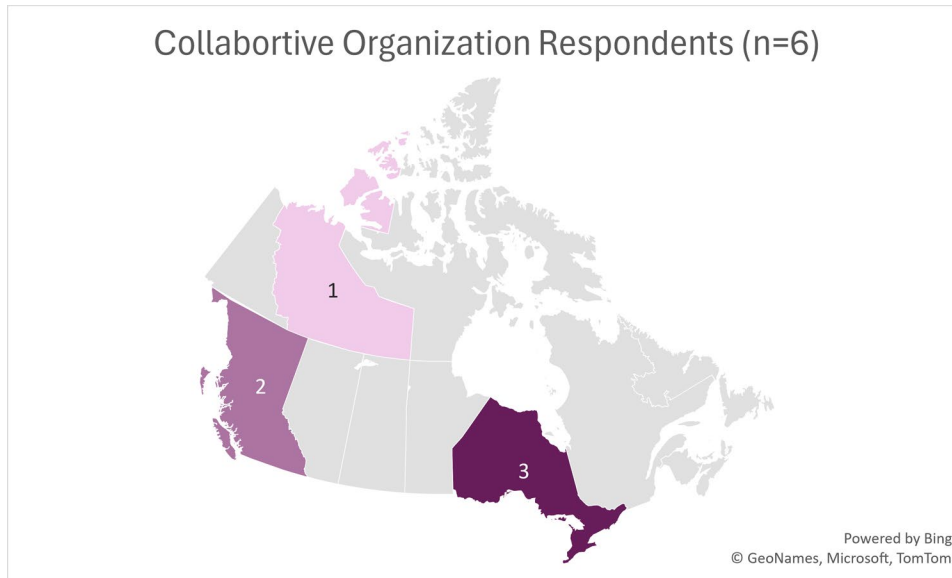
“We have had to halt the off-site shelter program. As homelessness becomes an even greater crisis, we are utilizing our boardroom as an emergency space on an alarmingly frequent basis. The motel program allowed us the opportunity to house those who were not at high risk, temporarily.”

While shelters are working to maintain all that was possible through this COVID funding, this requires extensive fundraising, which is becoming increasingly difficult as rates of giving continue to decrease.

Collaborative Project Results

A small number of organizations applied to do collaborative projects. These were projects where one organization acted as lead with one or more other shelters/THs in collaboration on service provision, joint programs, or sharing best practices. **In total, six collaborative projects were undertaken, which engaged 26 shelter/TH organizations. The total amount of funding to report on was \$719,702.**

Figure 5: Collaborative Organization Respondents



Number of People Served

The total number of individuals (service users) who were **directly supported by the funding was 1,188**. The total number of individuals who were **indirectly served by the funding was 39,050**. Despite reaching such a high number of individuals across a small number of projects, there were also **1,443 individuals turned away** from service and/or residency.

How Funds Were Spent

Much like the individual shelter organizations, the **vast majority of funds were allocated toward staffing** for the collaborative projects (nearly three-quarters). These projects including training programs, survivor projects, and bringing joint resources to shelters (like mental health services). This also allowed organizations to work together collaboratively to expand the reach of their services.

Figure 6: Funding Distribution of Category

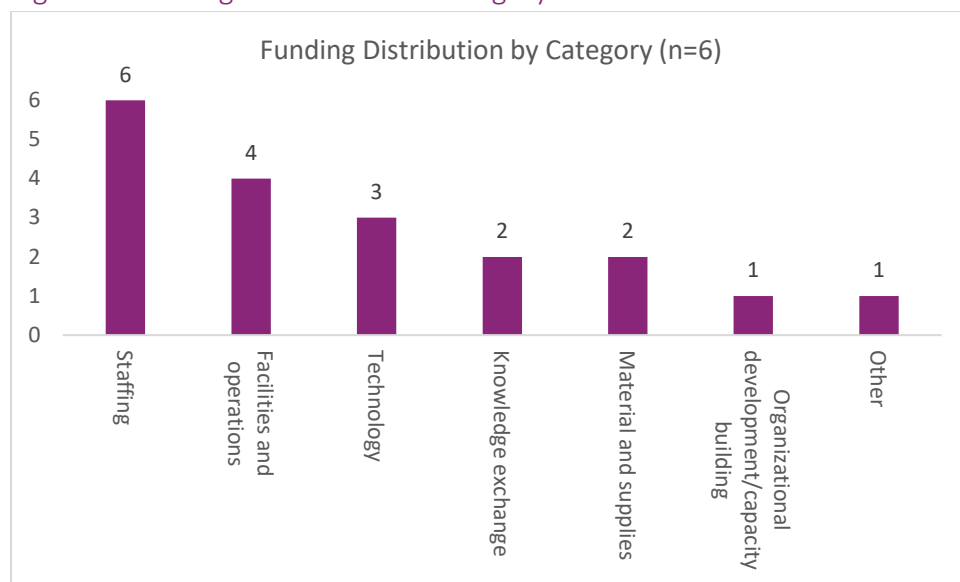


Table 6: What the Collaboration Funding was Spent On⁶

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Range	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total amount to report on	6	75,000	150,000	719,702	119,950.33	35,236.569
Staffing	6	6,2055	120,796	518,859	86,476.50	25,115.876
Material and supplies	6	6,4653	64,653	79,526	13,254.33	25,817.744
Transportation	6	5	5	5	0.83	2.041
Facilities and Operations	6	2,7960	27,960	55,056	9,176.00	10,628.927
Technology	6	12,353	12,353	20,030	3,338.33	5,367.874
Knowledge exchange	6	8,000	8,000	12,885	2,147.50	3,469.660
Organization Development and Capacity Building	6	11,180	11,180	11,180	1,863.33	4,564.216
Other	6	22,161	22,161	22,161	3,693.50	9,047.190

Organizations found these collaborations valuable, as partnering facilitated the ability to reach more of their communities. These were also an opportunity to share skills, knowledge, and best practices, which contributed to better client services across all the organizations involved. This also contributed to reduced isolation that many organizations were experiencing throughout the pandemic.

“The other VAW organizations have shared values, principles, and philosophy which is really important to ensure consistent approaches that are couched within an intersectional feminist

⁶ No funding was spent in the following categories: alternative accommodation, infection control, capital expenditures, publicity and promotion, and accessibility.

framework and are trauma-informed. We save a lot of time by not having to educate our partners. Being able to identify common needs and to develop regional approaches creates greater stability.”

“Honestly, working with the other VAW organizations broke the isolation one can feel when they are the only feminist resource in their community.”

Funding Environment

Unlike the individual organization projects, **these projects would not have gone forward at all without these funds**. These projects are often done off the side of people’s desks, so dedicated funds to focus on these projects allowed them to move forward. Unfortunately, most of the projects will not be able to continue beyond the funding period without securing ongoing funding.

Overall, there was high satisfaction with the efficiency of the funding (83% felt that the funding was extremely effective) and the experience of the funding application, process, and communication.

Table 7: Satisfaction with the Funding Process

	Extremely Positive	Somewhat Positive	Neither Positive or Negative
Registering for Funds	83%	0%	17%
Process to Receive Funds	83%	17%	0%
Communicating with WSC	100%	0%	0%

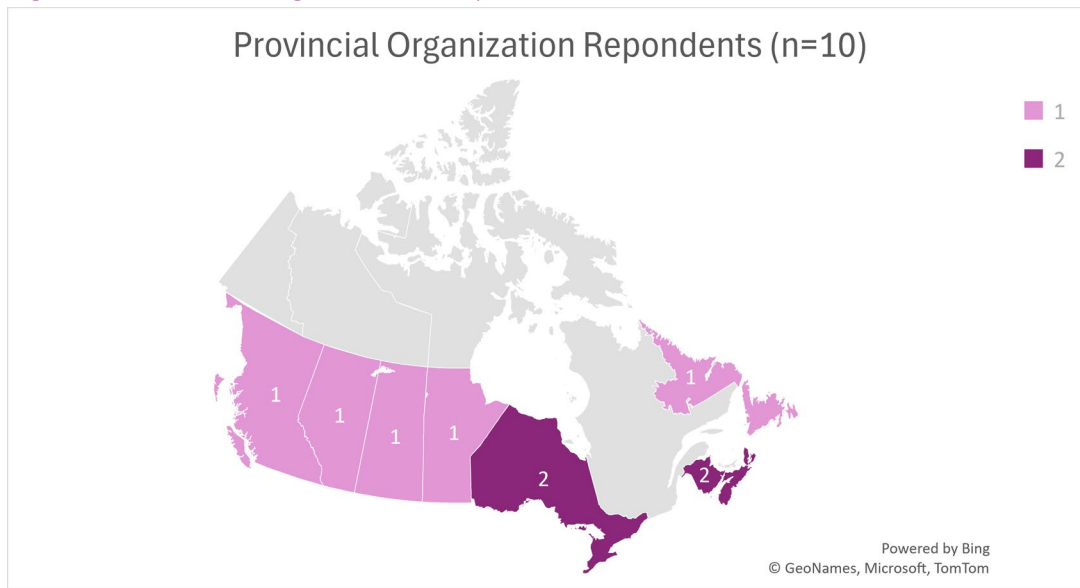
“This funding has been essential in developing a coordinated response for the people we serve in our region.”

“This stream of funding has been extremely beneficial and critical in addressing the gender gaps and safety of some of the communities’ most vulnerable and marginalized populations. We hope to see this work continue, and continue to be supported, as we see critical needs grow within our communities for these services.”

Provincial Organization Projects

WSC’s full members consist of the 16 provincial and territorial shelter/TH associations from across the country. Those members that run individual shelters were funded through the individual organization stream. We provided the provincial organizations outside of Quebec an opportunity to be funded to undertake projects, capacity building, and advocacy work. **There were 10 of these projects undertaken across eight provinces, for a total amount of \$1,224,660 to be reported on.**

Figure 7: Provincial Organization Respondents



Number of People Served

The total number of individuals (service users) who were **directly supported by the funding was 242**. The total number of individuals who were **indirectly served by the funding was 37,429**. No individuals were turned away, which makes sense due to the type of work undertaken.

How Funds Were Spent

Much like the other funds, the **vast majority was allocated toward staffing** for the provincial projects (60%). An additional 15% of the funding was directed toward organizational development and capacity building. These projects included implementing new systems and/or training in the region's shelters (e.g. HIFIS, harm reduction, child welfare), designing tool kits and resources (e.g. housing, HR, service navigation), and undertaking regional studies to improve shelter services. Organizations also built their internal capacity by hiring bookkeepers and upgrading financial systems, hiring individuals to support advocacy efforts, and improving data collection through new online systems. Many organizations mentioned efforts to address issues related to HR issues in their particular region.

Figure 8: Funding Distribution by Category

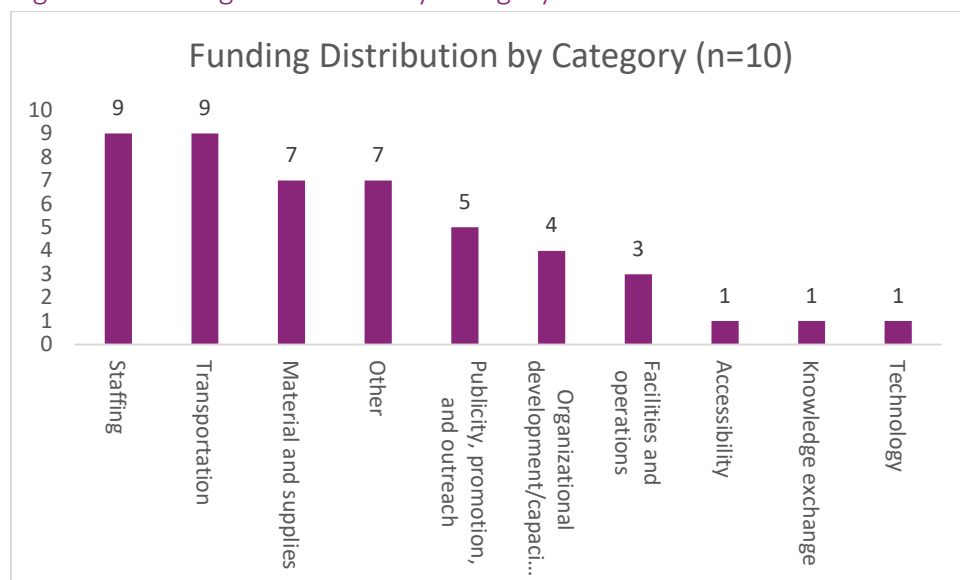


Table 8: What the Provincial Funding was Spent On⁷

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Range	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total amount to report on	10	12,5000	17,5000	1,224,660	122,466.00	43,197.099
Staffing	10	147,164.00	147,164.00	739,973.80	73,997.38	49,957.82507
Material and supplies	10	14,658.35	14,658.35	29,363.79	2,936.38	4,787.69008
Transportation	10	22,068.00	22,068.00	52,238.36	5,223.84	6,427.76472
Facilities and Operations	10	15,453.0	15,453.0	26,116.5	2,611.65	5,425.8021
Technology	10	11,658.05	11,658.05	11,658.05	1,165.81	3,686.59911
Knowledge exchange	10	5,498	5,498	5,498	549.80	1,738.620
Publicity, Promotion, and Outreach	10	51,299.80	51,299.80	68,496.15	6,849.62	15,955.64653
Organization Development and Capacity Building	10	126,067.00	126,067.00	187,026.91	18,702.69	39,418.20294
Accessibility	10	194	194	194	19.40	61.348
Other	10	28,471.44	28,471.44	104,094.44	10,409.44	10,670.43859

Through these projects, organizations expanded and strengthened partnerships, including bringing together shelter participants to learn and exchange knowledge. The provincial associations were also able to build their evidence base through research and information gathering, which allows them to better engage in advocacy and work with politicians.

⁷ No funding was spent in the following categories: alternative accommodation, infection control, and capital expenditures.

Without this funding, many organizations would have either not been able to undertake this work, or it would have been more limited in its scope. While these funds were critical for undertaking projects, they do not address the sector’s need for sustained operational funding both for network organizations and shelters/THs. Particularly networked and representative associations, like these provincial associations, often do not have operational funding and are required to be dependent on project-based funding. For those that hired staff to work on these projects, few are going to be able to maintain these positions without seeking additional funding sources.

“Additional funding opportunities like this one are needed in the future to continue building the capacity of provincial associations and frontline services and strengthening the GBV sector. In addition to lingering outbreaks and effects of COVID-19, multiple sources have described GBV as an epidemic.”

“Thanks so much to WSC for the streamlined application and reporting process and for trusting that we and our member agencies know best what is needed for our organizations and our communities!”

“This is the best way to roll out government dollars, without seeing a duplication of effort in our sector.”

WSC’s Use of Administrative Funds

Beyond the incredible work that shelters/THs across the country undertook, WSC used its administrative funds to support our ongoing work, expand and launch new projects, and engage with those across the country. The following is a selection of outcomes of the work undertaken.

Feminist Brain Drain: Labour Issues and Worker Wellness in the VAW Shelter Sector

Throughout 2022, WSC undertook a [study on worker wellness in the VAW sector](#). This study included a national survey in partnership with the Victimology Research Centre at Algonquin College, a series of focus groups with shelter management and frontline staff, and an in-person symposium. Beyond the creation of the final report, we also created a series of infographics to highlight best practices shared throughout study.

A critical issue that is driving the labour issue is funding challenges. Without regular operational funding increases tied to inflation for shelters/THs, organizations are unable to increase or offer competitive salaries and benefits. A few key findings include:

- More than one-quarter (28%) of survey respondents indicated that they thought about quitting their job.
- Nearly one-third of survey respondents reported that they worked an additional job to supplement their income.
- As staff turnover increases, existing staff are taking on more work, which is contributing to overwork and burnout.
- Among survey respondents, more than three-quarters (77%) were satisfied with their relationships with their colleagues, and 71% were satisfied with their relationships with their supervisors.

Funding – Advocacy Discussion Guide

Over 2023, WSC worked with the provincial and territorial shelter/TH associations to better understand the funding challenges that are faced by VAW shelters/THs. Based on our conversations, we created a discussion guide for the associations to support their advocacy with their provincial or territorial governments. We recognize that different regions are at different stages of advocacy, so this guide provides key challenges, recommendations that can be brought to government, and steps for engaging in the advocacy process.

Shockproofing Communities: A National Summit for the GBV Sector

In collaboration with the Canadian Women’s Foundation, WSC hosted a national summit with more than 500 leaders from gender justice and GBV organizations across the country from March 27-30, 2023, to exchange lessons learned during the pandemic to help “shockproof” the sector against future crises. This event included in-person and virtual activities, and a Hill Day to discuss the National Action Plan on GBV. Over the three days, there were more than 50 sessions. During the Hill Day, nearly 100 organizational leaders had over 50 meetings with MPs, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, and Senators. For a complete overview of the Summit, [see the event program](#) or the [webpage](#). WSC also hosted a pre-Summit dinner and panel event for 134 shelter workers. A final report of the summit has been previously submitted to WAGE by the Canadian Women’s Foundation

Northern Shelter/TH Gathering in Ottawa

In November 2023, WSC brought shelter representatives from all three territories together for training and networking in Ottawa. Participants engaged in sessions on trauma, [tech safety](#), strangulation and traumatic brain injury, and [PEACE for Canadian Children and Youth](#), sharing some of the common challenges faced by their shelters in the North. They also met with the Hon. Marci Ien, Minister of Women, Gender Equality, and Youth, and shared the urgent and ongoing needs of their communities. Given the size of the territories, isolation of northern communities, and cost of travel, territorial shelters are seldom able to come together. Yet, these shelters have many commonalities and similar needs, which are important to share. While WSC was responsible for the organization of this gathering, territorial shelter leaders established the directions for the events, as well as the needed training and sessions. We hope to see this network of shelters continue to collaborate and gather in the future.

“I really liked the idea that it was for women’s shelters, and they were coming from all across the territories. I think it’s really important to connect with each other and to bounce things off of each other because something that may not be working for me may be working at another shelter, so therefore I’ll get some ideas.” - Northern gathering participant

Shelter Ready Fund

Through the experience gained through this distribution of federal funds, WSC launched our own funding program, [Shelter Ready](#). We have undertaken two rounds of funding as of June 2024. In the first round, we granted \$500,000 of funds from the private sector to 20 organizations to continue, expand, or launch projects. In the second round, 20 organizations received \$5,000 each from the private sector to support the physical sheltering of companion pets along with clients. While we cannot offer the level of funds that were available to shelters through Response and Recovery, we see the value in being able to continue to support shelters that continue to be under-resourced. We hope to see these amounts expand throughout the life of our funding program.

Engaging Men & Boys Awareness Campaign

LG2, the marketing company behind [WSC's More Than campaign](#), approached us about doing another (this time largely pro bono) campaign as part of an internal LG2 employee competition. The result was [Crickets: Calling out casual sexism](#). The Crickets campaign was meant to help counter some of the online violence women and girls experience. We believe that smaller actions, like calling out casual sexism online, can help feed the momentum needed to eventually end gender-based violence. Our goal was to make non-violent men feel comfortable calling out other men on their casual sexism by turning the cricket emoji 🦏 🦏 🦏 into a way of calling out a sexist joke made online. On March 8, 2024, International Women's Day, LG2 identified a sexist comment on social media and worked with influencers to reply with the cricket emoji 🦏 🦏 🦏. We spent some funds on research for the idea, which found that 78% of Canadian men don't always feel comfortable calling out sexist comments and jokes they encounter on social media. The Crickets account across multiple platforms had 191 posts, 117 likes, and a total of 20 followers. There were 2.2K organic views overall. There were also ads across various platforms, resulting in a summarized impression of 13,756,050 for segments and PR social. Paid media generated more than 16.3M impressions, at a value of \$170k (this was all in-kind media).

WSC Expansion and Increased Capacity

When WSC undertook the role of distributing COVID-19 relief funding to shelters/THs in 2020, we were a five-person organization with less than \$1 million in annual revenue. Today, WSC has 12 staff and has been able to expand our work to reach more shelters/THs and provide more support. This includes creating more resources, expanding our social media reach, and increasing communication with our members. Administrative funding was spent on several staff positions across grants & development, research & policy, knowledge exchange, operations, and communications. A small amount was also spent on a consultant to help tell the story of the Response & Recovery Funding, both for posterity and for potential future donors (e.g. foundations and private sector). We also invested in our first database, SmartSimple, of the over 600 shelters and transition houses across the country. This database will help ensure www.sheltersafe.ca is kept up to date and keep track of other support initiatives for shelters, such as future grants through Shelter Ready.

Final Comments

We asked funding recipients to share final thoughts on funding through WSC and with WAGE.

Overwhelmingly, people indicated how grateful they were for this funding. At a time when organizations were not always sure how they were going to keep the doors open, not only was this funding available, but it provided a level of flexibility that is largely unprecedented. This funding came through quickly, was easy to access, and many felt like they were trusted to spend the money.

Many recipients hope that WAGE will consider renewing these funds in the future. Funding sources that are ongoing, flexible, and cover operational costs are rare and desperately needed to continue to offer safe, welcoming, and supportive spaces to heal and move forward from violence.

"The flexibility of this type of operating funding is so incredibly helpful. It demonstrates that WAGE and WSC understand that maintaining high-quality existing services for survivors of violence is important and valuable. It also demonstrates trust in the non-profit and charitable sector to allocate funds responsibly, to where they are needed most. Thank you. We hope these types of trust-based funding opportunities are available in the future."

Thank You

"I just want to say thank you to the federal government for recognizing the need for shelters to be supported during this time."

"Thank you so much for your work to support our organization and other shelters across the province over the past few years. Having access to accessible, flexible funding made our jobs so much easier and allowed us to do more for our community than would have otherwise been possible."

"Thank you for making this funding available and for making the process for obtaining and using the funds relatively simple. It did make a positive impact for our organization, that without it would have made our operations much different and more difficult."

"Again, just a big thank you to the WAGE and WSC for seeing this need and offering support immediately. Your hard work and dedication made a huge impact on the most vulnerable in our communities."

"Just a huge THANK YOU for making this process easy and simple. The priority of getting the funds to the shelters in a timely manner was clearly evident and incredibly appreciated!"

"Just, thank you. Without your support, we could not have continued to support individuals experiencing domestic abuse in a time of great stress and uncertainty."

"Being part of this grant was invaluable, and the support received was pivotal for our organization's efforts. The funding provided a lifeline, enabling us to address critical needs and extend our reach to those in vulnerable situations. It played a crucial role in sustaining our programs during a challenging period, allowing us to provide essential services, support, and resources... Thank you for recognizing the importance of our work and providing the necessary resources to make a meaningful difference."