



# Community Needs Assessment Summary

2025



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# Executive Summary: Overview

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***CPNP is an important national program that aims to improve the health of pregnant women and new parents and their babies who face multiple challenges due to the social determinants of health. Promoting and supporting breastfeeding and maternal nutrition have important implications for both short- and long-term maternal and infant health outcomes.***

***This program provides such a great opportunity to invest in maternal and child health within communities.***

— J.Baxter, et al 2024

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Healthy Start provides community-based pregnancy and parenting groups, nutrition & health education, and practical support to families who face multiple challenges related to inequities in the social determinants of health. Over the years, we have witnessed immense social change within our communities. However, the core of our program—connection and relationship building—remains central to our work.

This report, *A Community Needs Assessment for Healthy Start*, details the findings of the assessment conducted by Healthy Start in Winnipeg, Manitoba, between November 2024 to January 2025.

This needs assessment was driven by Healthy Start's commitment to remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community it serves with a continued emphasis on upstream public health approaches, community mobilization, and reducing barriers for equity-seeking families. The goals were to:

- Understand the most pressing needs of pregnant individuals and families who use our program
- Identify existing resources and gaps in services
- Inform the development of program enhancements and new initiatives

We have worked hard to centre the perspectives of program participants and community partners in this report.



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# Executive Summary: Methods

To gather comprehensive data, Healthy Start employed a mixed-methods approach, including:



## **Participant Surveys**

184 surveys were completed by program participants, gathering information on their needs, experiences, and preferences related to pregnancy, parenting, and access to resources.

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## **Community Partner Surveys**

26 surveys were completed by community organizations and service providers, offering insights into community-wide needs and opportunities for collaboration.

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## **Focus Group**

A focus group was conducted with program participants providing rich qualitative data on their experiences, challenges, and recommendations for Healthy Start.

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## **Participant Stories and Lived Experiences**

Ensure a comprehensive understanding by incorporating participant stories alongside survey data, recognizing that lived experiences offer nuanced insights often missed by traditional methods, thus providing invaluable context to our community needs assessment.

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## **Environmental Scan**

Review services offered in the nine community areas where we offer ten drop-in groups.

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# Executive Summary: Key Findings

## Strengths | Enhancements | Actions

Our comprehensive community needs assessment, incorporating surveys, focus groups, and participant stories, affirmed Healthy Start's value and relevance in supporting vulnerable pregnant individuals and new parents. Participants praised the program's comprehensive approach, including accessible community-based services, practical support, and personalized care from nurses, dietitians, and outreach staff.

To further enhance impact and address evolving needs, Healthy Start will prioritize regular feedback mechanisms, cultural responsiveness, expanded outreach, and strengthened community partnerships. This will ensure continued support, connection, and empowerment for participants and their families.

## *Key Strengths*

### Accessible, Wrap-Around Care

The Community Needs Assessment identified that Healthy Start provides accessible, wrap-around care through community-based drop-in groups led by a multidisciplinary team of nurses, dietitians, and outreach staff. We foster supportive relationships by delivering evidence-based information and connecting equity-seeking participants to vital community services—all within a non-judgmental and empowering environment.

### Addressing Immediate Needs with Practical Support

The assessment highlighted the program's crucial role in addressing immediate needs through healthy meals, meal bags, prenatal vitamins, and vitamin D for breastfeeding babies. Food coupons were identified as particularly vital for addressing food security and attracting participants. Additionally, it was demonstrated that one-on-one outreach support effectively connects individuals with community resources to meet their unique needs.

### Connection and Relationship Building

Relationships participants developed with staff and each other were a key motivator for their continued return to the drop-in groups. Many people expressed that the groups fostered social connection and reduced isolation. Participants frequently expressed feeling lonely and isolated, and many struggled with their mental health.



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# Executive Summary: Key Findings

## *Areas for Enhancement*

### **Nurturing Connections**

Participants requested increased opportunities for peer support within community groups, incorporating targeted resources and activities to foster connections between families.

### **Cultural Responsiveness and Participants Feedback**

The assessment revealed that our program needs to strive to offer culturally safe programming. We will accomplish this through an annual participant survey, focus group with Indigenous participants and targeted staff training on Indigenous and newcomer cultural safety. This feedback will include questions assessing our program's cultural awareness and delivery of culturally safe programming.

### **Strengthen Strategic Community Partnerships**

The assessment also highlighted our continued need to develop strategic partnerships with organizations serving equity-seeking populations, including Indigenous and newcomer communities, to improve program visibility and provide integrated support.

### **Community Outreach and Resource Evaluation and Update**

The assessment feedback highlighted the need to implement a strategic outreach plan, combining community engagement with targeted online strategies, and to conduct a thorough review of our resources.

### **Enhance transition support for graduating families**

To enhance transition support for families graduating when their children turn one, we will connect them with community resources. Additionally, based on feedback received, we will explore funding for ongoing parenting support.



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# Executive Summary: Action Plan— Implementing Enhancements

## Nurture Connections (medium- to long-term goal)

- I Develop and implement peer support activities for our groups; led by outreach staff
- I Assess effectiveness through the annual participant survey with specific questions to assess whether attending Healthy Start increases peer connectedness

## Enhance Cultural Responsiveness and Safety (medium- to long-term goal)

- I Identify Indigenous organizations offering groups/classes on traditional pregnancy and parenting teachings and refer participants
- I Provide annual staff training on Indigenous cultural practices and culturally safe care
- I Conduct an annual focus group with Indigenous participants to seek feedback

## Implement Annual Participant Feedback Survey (medium- to long-term goal)

- I Include questions to assess if Healthy Start offers culturally safe programming, particularly from Indigenous and newcomer perspectives
- I Analyze findings and present them to funders and the community
- I Based on annual survey results, enhance or update our services and programming

## Strengthen Strategic Community Partnerships (short- to medium-term goal)

- I Review our partnership database to identify organizations we need to establish better connections with
- I Prioritize developing connections with at least five Indigenous and newcomer organizations

## Expand our Community Outreach Plan (short- to medium-term goal)

- I Conduct community outreach and postering
- I Develop a social media content calendar and track website and social media engagement metric monthly

## Evaluate and Update Resources (long-term goal)

- I Staff will review existing resources, activities, and handouts to determine if the resources are relevant, up-to-date with current evidence-based information and presented with cultural safety in mind

## Enhance Transition Support for Graduating Families (medium- to long-term goal)

- I For each neighbourhood we serve, staff will develop a handout of community programming/ services for children over one; these will be offered to every family graduating from our program
- I Conduct a feasibility study of developing programming for children over one, including community demand and funding opportunities

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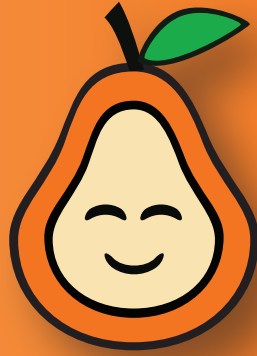
Short term: 2-3 months | Medium term: 8-12 months | Long term: 12+ months

# Executive Summary: Activities

Through our community needs assessment, we identified key participant needs and Healthy Start's existing strengths. The following activities will ensure we are effectively meeting those needs.



Please see our website ([hsmm.ca](http://hsmm.ca)) for the complete needs assessment



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