



READY TO RENT, RENTSMART ONTARIO FINAL REPORT

Present the project description / overall objectives (were they achieved?)

YES! We have successfully implemented the Ready to Rent (R2R), RentSmart program that provides interactive life skills and knowledge based education and support for Tenants, Landlords, and Community Educators with one goal: “Successful Tenancies”. R2R Ontario Project, RentSmart Ontario provides correlated housing stabilization education, skills training and supports to renters/tenants, housing organizations, homelessness service organizations and private sector landlords with the goal of healthy tenancies. Healthy tenancies are key to housing stability, prevention of homelessness and strong communities. The RentSmart Ontario team is training and certifying Community Educators across the Province. These Educators include: Housing Support Workers, Mental Health & Addictions Workers, Municipal/Regional Housing Support Staff, Property Managers, Youth Workers, Community Health & Outreach Workers, Re-Settlement Workers and more to deliver the RentSmart suite of programs. Certified Community Educators are then delivering RentSmart courses to clients they serve in their organization or community.

Our community engagement efforts have been very successful. By using strategic communication and direct target marketing, we have surpassed our targets. To date our team has trained 102 Community Educators, in 19 Cities, 12 different Regions, and supports 57 agencies such as: Housing Providers, Mental Health & Addictions Agencies, Municipal Agencies, Property & Landlord Management Groups, Emergency Housing Support & Shelters, Community Health Centers, and New-Comer/ Aboriginal / Multicultural Agencies. You can view our full list of community partners on our website, www.rentsmartontario.ca. We also have a growing list of communities and organizations already booking future training sessions or inquiring about bringing the RentSmart programming to their community. This all happened through our strong, targeted community engagement efforts in promoting the program across Ontario.

The primary focus of the ESDC project grant is a multi-layered Ontario-wide community engagement effort that is an essential phase of a larger RentSmart Ontario project to seek out champions to empower their communities and build the capacity of organizations and individuals who will ultimately lead change in housing stability to prevent and reduce homelessness. The R2R model is built to scale through community partnership with delivery through community leadership.

We have initially, and will further, engage with our Provincial Association partners to assist with communications and outreach planning for publicizing the overall aim of the program to the sector. Local community engagement efforts will be directed to housing and homeless-service community organizations in the targeted regions and/or municipalities.

Lastly, we developed a growth plan supporting a new sub-population through the province by reaching out and partnering with Post-Secondary Institutions to help students.

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Methodology

RentSmart Ontario is building relationships and strategic partnerships through community engagement efforts. The engagement efforts have included attending conferences either by presenting workshops and/or exhibiting to talk directly to decision makers. We also promoted the program with clean and clear communications, website, marketing handouts, created presentation kits and worked with partners to help get the message out across Ontario. Lastly we support our community partners and educators along with the participant that receives our educational program.

Report on achieved activities and results

As stated above – to date we have 102 educators, and have partnered with 57 agencies in 19 cities across 12 different regions. We also have 3 more Educator training sessions booked in 2018, and many others are waiting to be trained, or interested in, booking a training session to get Certified Educators in their community to deliver the program.

Attached are our activity maps. These are a visual of our engagement of Ontario, please review. These activity maps clearly show the demand, interest and the scope of our community engagement that has been achieved in the past year by RentSmart Ontario. We are also creating more partnerships with organizations like OMSSA, AHMO, CMHC and so many more. Not to mention now supporting Post-Secondary Intuitions and students.

Communication Plan

Our communication plans included first engaging communities and organizations by reaching out to our direct target market such as: Housing Providers, Municipal Agencies, Mental Health & Addictions Agencies, Property & Landlord Management Groups, Emergency Housing Support & Shelters, Community Health Centers, and others that would be interested in training. Secondly, then certifying staff to become Community Educators to deliver the RentSmart suite of programs in their communities. This includes developing a website with detailed information on our program, creating a social media strategy plan, promotional material, presentation package kits, and attending conferences to network, exhibit or present to educate decision makers about the RentSmart program. Developing strategic relationship partnerships with key organizations helped us deliver our message to their members, and expanding our overall communication reach.

Once educators are certified, our team continues our communication efforts to help and support them to implement and deliver the RentSmart programs in their community.

Was the communication plan efficient? List what worked what didn't

Yes, our communication plan was very effective. Each time we attended a conference, housing forum or a targeted audience event, it lead to a list of communities interested in partnering with RentSmart to deliver the program and have certified Educators in their community. At the ONPHA conference in Nov.

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2017 we had a waiting list of people who wanted to talk to us at our booth to learn more. Over 60 of them signed up for more information to connect and discuss bringing RentSmart training sessions to their city or region.

Since our Ontario Master Trainer was still going through the certification process to deliver RentSmart Educator (T.T.T) we sometimes had to wait to train community supports since we were scheduling registration of training sessions based on our partners trainers availability.

What worked what didn't?

Our efforts created results; we were strategic in our community engagement choices and partnerships. Through our community engagement efforts, we were able to create a wait list of communities who want more information about RentSmart, or to bring training into their communities. Our engagements also lead to over 100 Community Educators being trained in 6 months.

Last item of the "Reporting , Deliverables and Timelines section in the agreement

We achieved all but one deliverable within the timelines of this agreement – that deliverable being a certified Francophone Community Educator to deliver the RentSmart program. Communities we work with choose who they are going to send to a RentSmart Educator training session. Therefore finding a francophone attendee is slightly out of our control. However, our team does talk to every community about the program being offered in French and English, to see if there are any possible francophone attendees. We will be achieving this deliverable in this coming year, just not in the timelines of this grant. CMHC plans to send bilingual Educators to our RentSmart Educator (T.T.T) scheduled for December 4-7, 2018. We are also working with City of Ottawa and looking at dates to book a training session in their community. There will most likely be francophone trainers attending this session. Our program curriculum will also, soon, be fully translated to French; we had to update changes before the translation process could start.

Report on roll up of pre- and post-assessment results for both cohorts

How our program supports end users participants in communities: As you know we are implementing a proven R2R RentSmart model from other provinces, into Ontario. First, we had to do the adaption of the curriculum into Ontario legislation. Then, we had to certify Community Educators and help them to implement this program into their municipality or organization. Therefore the timeline from how and when they gain access to our program can often take some time. Once implemented and the RentSmart program training is complete, the delivery of the program begins and our team continues to support successful tenancies through RentSmart Education.

Report on obtained results /activities

We exceeded results with 102 Community Educators, supporting 57 agencies, in 19 Cities across 12 Regions. The original target was to have 40 Community Educators supported across 10 regions. We have run 7 RentSmart Educator training session, and in addition to that there are 3 more sessions already booked for remainder of this year. This funding was to engage communities, and we did. Additionally,

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we are supporting Educators in the work they are doing by giving them more tools that they can use in supporting their homelessness prevention.

Activities included communication and promotional strategy, partnerships, community partners, registrations, certified trainers, administrative and operational systems, evaluation and impact data we could share with our partners, connected and helped tenants and landlords, established a growth plan by developing a new strategic partnership by expanding the RentSmart program to serve students, provided logistical support and guidance to Educators, made necessary program adjustments to better support our Educators and so much more.

Success stories

- Receiving a welcoming and positive response from communities about RentSmart programming across Ontario.
- Strong relationship with our national partner, Ready to Rent BC, and our other provincial partners.
- Many regions, communities and organizations are inviting us in to give presentations and showing strong interest in bringing RentSmart program to their community.
- The Canadian Institute sent us an appreciation letter with evaluation results stating that the RentSmart presentation was well received, and they found it valuable and informative and they felt they gained practical insights by attending. This has led to a partnership with CMHC.
- Celebrated our 1st Graduated RentSmart Community Educators class on December 1, 2017, in the Niagara Region.
- Adaption of Ontario legislation of the RentSmart curriculum from British Columbia was completed late November 2017.
- French and English website and promotional material completed and approved for use.
- During the CAEH conference, our program was highlighted as a best practice model to work with during a Landlord Engagement session by Dr. Tim Aubry of University of Ottawa, who created the ESDC Landlord Engagement Toolkit.
- Our Call for Submission to OMSSA conference in May has been approved. We presented a 90 minute workshop on RentSmart at their 2018 Leadership Symposium.
- Ministry of Ontario Health and Long-Term Care endorsed and shared our program information. They see our program assisting Mental Health and Addiction agencies.
- Educators have started to run participant courses; course calendars are available on RentSmart Ontario and Ready to Rent BC websites.
- RentSmart Ontario has been invited to speak and present a variety of Conferences and Housing Forums. Our 90 minute presentation about RentSmart at the 2018 Leadership Symposium was well attended and received - we now have more communities interested in bringing our educational program to their community. Many of the attendees were Service Managers from regions across Ontario.
- Community Living Toronto, on April 30, hosted two RentSmart engagement presentations to bring their partners in to learn about the RentSmart programming. These presentations

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were also well received and they are planning to bring our program to their organization and some of their partners.

- Since June, we have 102 certified community Educators trained in Ontario, from 57 Agencies, in 19 cities and 12 Regions.
- RentSmart helps Students, our new Business and Marketing Plan has been launched and being well received from many Post-Secondary Institutions. Niagara College is already a partner.

Benefits and value for participants

RentSmart supports individual's efforts to find and maintain good housing. Through taking RentSmart education, people become well prepared for when they apply for housing and are given the skills and knowledge to be great tenants.

The benefits of the RentSmart course are empowered tenants who understand their rights and responsibilities, communicate effectively with landlords, neighbors and roommates, budget to maintain their housing and look after their home. Financial benefits include the reduction in the costs related to moving, damages and evictions, as well as the societal benefits of stable housing and all its related impacts.

RentSmart is for anyone who is a new tenant, has faced barriers to housing in the past or is unfamiliar with tenants' rights and responsibilities. It builds knowledge, confidence and skills so people can make better decisions about rental housing. Even those who are happy with their present housing can benefit from RentSmart. The rental market is complex – there is always a lot to learn.

RentSmart Certificate covers the following topics:

- Tenant rights and responsibilities
- Landlord responsibilities and expectations
- Tenancy, human rights and privacy laws
- Roommates and neighbours
- Budgeting and keeping housing affordable
- Effective communication
- Maintenance dos and don'ts
- Fire and safety
- Pests
- Community resources

RentSmart Basics discusses:

Being a good tenant requires knowledge, skills and confidence in knowing your rights. RentSmart Basics provides you with a quick overview on the three things you need to know to find and keep your housing:

- pay your rent in full and on time
- don't disturb your neighbours
- look after the home

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List best practices

RentSmart uses Best Practices for Adult Education and Learning which includes:

- Self-directed
- Participatory
- Experiential
- Relevant & practical
- Draw on knowledge & life experiences
- Informal & positive environment
- Addresses multiple styles of learning

We do this by delivering a RentSmart Educator course that builds on three core competencies for successful delivery of adult learning:

- Content and knowledge about the RentSmart best practices, curriculum and model
- Principles of adult education and how to deliver education to meet a variety of learning styles
- Facilitation and group management to assist learning and safe environments

Lessons learned

- Project work plan was ambitious. We developed a new strategy to re-align program work plan in a more realist time frame.
- Establishing certification of our Ontario Master Trainer has taken longer than originally projected. We are scheduling and working with our national partners Ready to Rent BC to run RentSmart Educator (T.T.T) sessions in Ontario until trainer is officially certified.
- Ontario is a large province, therefore we may need additional Master Trainers to help and assist with running RentSmart Educator training sessions throughout the province to meet the demand.
- Although engagement with communities is going well, the time it takes to schedule the RentSmart Educator Registration process and choose the dates with interested the Municipalities and Community Organizations is taking longer - since we have to schedule around our national and provincial partners availability. We are projecting this process to become easier once Ontario has an official Master Trainer to run the program.
- Some Community Educators need additional supports to run their first RentSmart participant course. We have put additional supports and communication tools in place.
- The adaption to Ontario legislation is ongoing as things need to be updated to stay current, and maintain standards. Manual corrections and Residential Tenancy Act updates have been needed to be revised.
- Finding resources to help fund training and manuals. We have created a "Resource Your Course" document to help give suggestions to our partners and Educators on how to access funding. We are always looking for more ways to assist our Community Educators to run tenant and landlord participant courses.
- Difficult to find Francophone Community Educator since the communities choose who attends Educator training sessions. It would be ideal if a Master Trainer was Bilingual.

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- Timelines to translate the curriculum in French has also taken longer since the curriculum had to go through the Ontario adaption process first. The word count is also much higher than what was original estimated.
- After Educators are certified, for many, it takes time for them to implement the RentSmart programming into their organization. This time delay was not originally projected.
- There has also been employment movement, and some Community Educators have changed job positions and now are unable to run courses in their new role.
- Created additional support documents to simplify educator's course registrations.