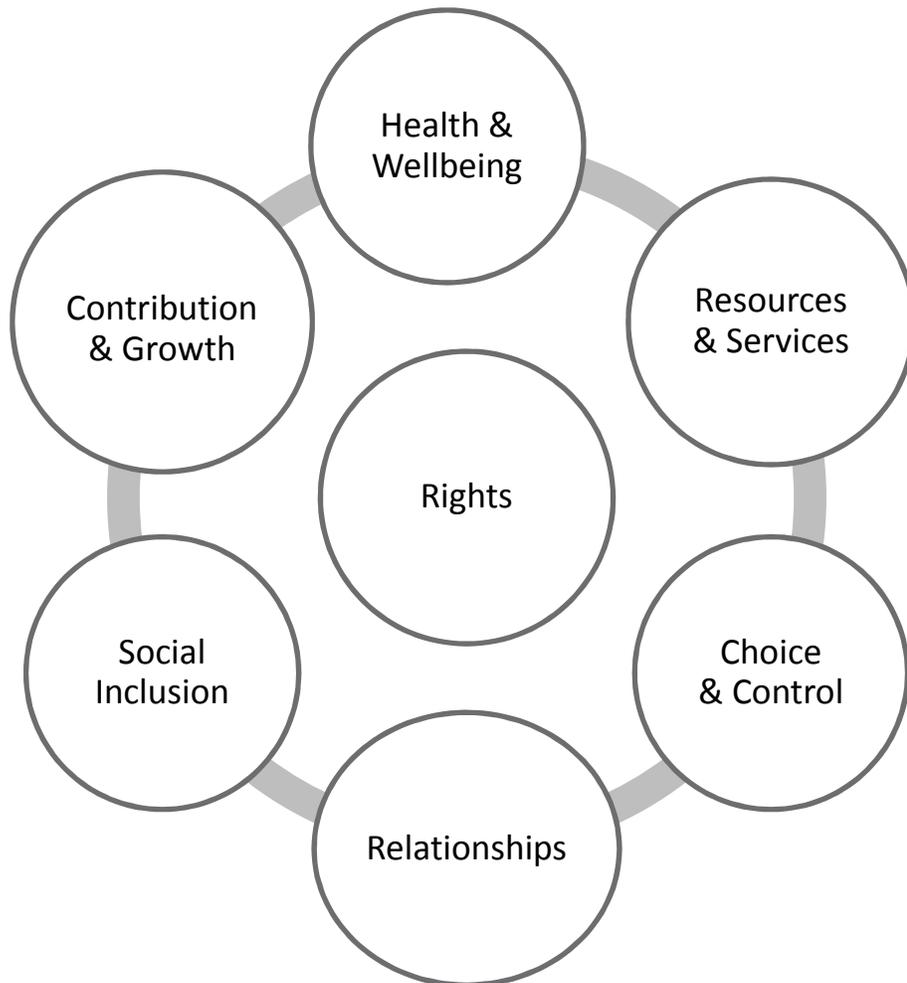


What We Heard



One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.

Bryan H. McGill

Abilities Manitoba
Quality Assurance Project

This report highlights the information and stories gathered as we spoke with people with disabilities, their families and service providers in the winter/spring 2018 as part of the Quality Assurance Framework project.

Efforts were made to make this report accessible and easy to understand. Given the content and topic areas, at times it was challenging to say what we heard in plain language. To help with reading the report we have put the meaning of some words below.

Abilities Manitoba – a network of agencies that work together to improve services for people with intellectual disabilities. More information can be found at www.abilitiesmanitoba.org

Belonging – to feel happy, comfortable and involved

Contribution – something that you do to help achieve a goal with others, being part of something and helping with its success

Framework – a structure or system

Health in Common – an organization in Winnipeg that helps agencies to plan and evaluate in order to improve services. More information can be found at www.healthincommon.ca

Meaningful – important to the person

Outcomes - what matters to people using services, as well as the end result of activities, and can be used to both plan and measure activity.

The Possibility Post – a blog on the Abilities Manitoba website that provides updates on this project. It can be found at <http://www.abilitiesmanitoba.org/category/blog/>

Resources & Services – many different services and supports that could be available for people with disabilities and their families

Service Provider – an agency or person who provides services to someone

Social Inclusion – taking part in the community, feeling valued and important in your community

Social Roles – a valued social role is when a person does something regularly that is important to other people. The more valued social roles a person has the more chances they have to make friends, be involved with different communities and be provided with opportunities to access the good things in life. Many people believe social roles make life better and more meaningful.

Standards – expectations, guidelines or rules

Stakeholder – someone who is interested in and or would be affected by services for people with disabilities in Manitoba.

Well-Being – being comfortable, healthy or happy

The Project

The Department of Families and Abilities Manitoba are working together to create a Quality Assurance Framework for services to people with intellectual disabilities in Manitoba. We intend to discover and develop four things:

1. What does a good life look like? (What outcomes are present when people with disabilities (or any of us) are living a good life?)
2. How do we know when people are living a good life? How do we **measure** or discover this in same way all around Manitoba?
3. What do we need to do to help people to live a good life? What standards need to be met to ensure this is happening?
4. Tools that will help service providers improve their services or help people in the best way possible. How do we continue to improve and encourage growth for all service providers?

Who is guiding the project?

A Steering Committee as well as a Working Group provides oversight, direction and guidance towards the goals of the project. Each group has people from government and the community including people with disabilities, families and service providers. Two ongoing Reference Groups (one of self-advocates and the other of families) provide important feedback throughout the project. When finished the Framework will be providing recommendations to the project sponsor, the Deputy Minister of Dept. of Families.

Listening and Learning

We began the project by talking to people with disabilities, their families and service providers through a variety of ways. Focus groups and surveys were done in order to tell people across the province about the quality assurance project and to get their feedback on two main areas (outcomes and standards).

We visited seven different areas of the Province (Selkirk, Steinbach, Winnipeg, Dauphin, Brandon, Thompson and Winkler)

We asked two main questions:

- 1) What is a good life?
- 2) What do people need from their paid services to support that good life?

How Did People Participate?	
Focus Group Participation	242
Surveys	69
Written submissions	37
Total	348

We held focus groups with each group separately to make sure that people felt able to freely share their thoughts and ideas. We limited the number of people who attended each group in order to make sure that the size stayed easy to facilitate and small enough to have good conversations.

We told people about the focus groups and survey through email, Facebook, Twitter, local newspapers and phone calls. We asked that people print and hand out the information to those that might not have access to a computer or internet.

Attendance was different in each area with some areas requiring more energy to get the word out than others. In total, over 240 people took part.

For those that did not wish to or were not able to attend, we offered the opportunity to send in answers to the two questions in writing or online. We received 63 online submissions and 37 written ones for a total of 100.

Who participated?	
Self-Advocate	108
Family Member	115
Service Provider	117
Community Support Worker	6
Other	2
Total	341

All information received from focus groups and surveys was reviewed by Health in Common who developed a detailed report of the findings. Below are the main points that we heard.

What We Heard

Self-advocates, family members, and service providers shared ideas about a good life. We noticed common themes; through all feedback was the basic **rights** of people with disabilities to enjoy life to the fullest, and have the freedom to achieve their dreams.

Self-advocates deeply value **choice**, and want support from workers and families to make their own safe choices and good decisions. Choice is based on respect for the person and getting the support that the person wants and needs, in the way they wish to be supported.

Many self-advocates connect choice to **contribution and growth**, and want support for learning, new experiences, and opportunities for training and work. This was also highlighted as important by families and service providers.

Meaningful work (paid or unpaid) or interests (such as swimming lessons, curling, or art classes) are very important, provide a sense of purpose, connect one to the broader community, and help develop natural relationships. As one person said, “Without meaningful things to do, mental health suffers and so does one’s belief in possibilities.”

Self-advocates often spoke of family and friends as important to a good life. Relationships with others create a sense of **belonging**. Creating a natural circle of friends is important to families and service providers because it improves quality of life and engages others as supports to their loved one.

Lives are enriched when we participate in the community, interact with community members, and play different social roles. Whether we are a student, an employee, a volunteer, or a member of a sports team, **social inclusion** means communities who value people with disabilities at home, work or at play.

A good life means balancing full participation in the community with comfort and safety.

Self-Advocates, family members, and service providers spoke often about many aspects of **health and wellbeing**. Physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of individuals is a basic need, and an important human right. Important to wellbeing is a place to call home that meets one’s individual needs.

A range of **resources and services** were described as important to living a good life. Individuals and families across Manitoba want a better understanding of what is available, services that are easy to find and get into, and services that work together with others.

Caring, respectful, and well-trained staff are very important. We heard frequently that staff who have the right values and have knowledge and understanding of the Vulnerable Persons Act and Human Rights can make a difference in so many meaningful ways.

Self-advocates, families and service providers advocated for better wages, ongoing training and improved respect for support workers' valued role. Regular, clear communication between families and staff, and between services also is important to good support.

Self-advocates and families highly value the ability to access the right service at the right time. Many individuals and families face challenges accessing supports (e.g., speech therapy, life skills training, respite, and support when things are not going well).

People living outside of Winnipeg identified particular challenges accessing local services and supports, and spoke about fewer resources, lack of services for those who have aged out of school, fewer work opportunities, and ongoing transportation challenges. All these led to higher costs of accessing services.

In the North, people also spoke frequently about the higher cost of living and housing as being a significant barrier.

What are we doing next?

Next we will use everything that people have told us as well as what we learned from other Provinces to describe the outcomes and standards that are best for Manitoba. We will also create a way to measure and discover people's individual goals and outcomes.

While measuring whether service providers are meeting the standards is not part of the current project, it remains an important part of an overall quality framework. Knowing how our services are impacting the people we serve as well as learning about areas where we could improve is one of the main goals of this project.

Once most of the work is complete, we will once again connect with people across the Province to ensure that we heard what was needed and have

developed something that is valued and important to those that are most impacted by it. This will help shape the final recommendation made to the Deputy Minister.

To keep in touch with what is happening with this project, you can follow the blog called [The Possibility Post](#) on the Abilities Manitoba website where regular updates are shared.

*Special thanks to the Quality Assurance Reference Groups (Self Advocate & Family) and more specifically Valerie Wolbert for assistance in ensuring this report was written in plain language and accessible to as many people as possible.