



NOVEMBER 2020

SMALL STEPS FOR BIG CHANGES

Pilot Project Report

PREPARED FOR: YMCA OF OKANAGAN

Land acknowledgement:

We would like to respectfully recognize that this research was executed, and the Small Steps for Big Changes program was housed, on the ancestral, traditional unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. We would like to recognize that the Syilx Okanagan peoples have lived here before us and continue to live here now. We are grateful to live, work and play on their unceded territory.



Funding acknowledgement:



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Partnership Recognition Fund

Common abbreviations in report:

Diabetes Prevention Research Group (DPRG)

Small Steps for Big Changes (SSBC)

Motivational Interviewing (MI)

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ABOUT THE YMCA PILOT PROJECT

SMALL STEPS FOR BIG CHANGES is a program designed to help individuals at risk of developing type two diabetes reduce their risk through diet and exercise modifications. The Small Steps for Big Changes program offers six, one-on-one diet and exercise counselling sessions over three weeks and a one-month follow-up appointment. This free program was running for two years at the Kelowna Downtown YMCA with coaches from the Diabetes Prevention Research Group (DPRG) running all sessions.

The goal of the pilot project was to transition Small Steps for Big Changes into a sustainable community program by creating a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership between the DPRG research team at the University of British Columbia and YMCA of Okanagan staff and managerial team.

Key objectives:

- ✓ Train YMCA frontline staff and fitness managers to be Small Steps for Big Changes coaches
- ✓ Deliver Small Steps for Big Changes by YMCA staff at two YMCA sites
- ✓ Assess the fidelity, effectiveness, facilitators and barriers of training YMCA staff to become Small Steps for Big Changes coaches, and delivering the program



ABOUT THE YMCA-DPRG PARTNERSHIP

Mission

- To increase physicians' awareness, commitment and confidence in SSBC as a behaviour change program.
- To continue to provide evidence of the effectiveness of SSBC to foster support from decision makers.
- To build and support champions for our partnership.
- To ensure accessible and quality service for everyone in need within the community.

Vision

An effective and accessible behaviour change program that is sustainable and scalable to reach people at risk of type two diabetes in our community.

Values

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| ✓ Accessible | ✓ Quality |
| ✓ Client-centred | ✓ Respectful |
| ✓ Collaborative | ✓ Responsive |
| ✓ Evidence-based | ✓ Supportive |
| ✓ Inclusive | |



PARTNERSHIP TO DATE

In 2018, an implementation team co-developed the pilot project that would translate the Small Steps for Big Changes program from a DPRG-led initiative to fit within two YMCA of Okanagan community sites: **Kelowna Family YMCA** and the **Kelowna Downtown YMCA**. The pilot included YMCA of Okanagan staff implementing the Small Steps for Big Changes program. After one-year of planning, including three structured meetings with the implementation team, past participants, stakeholders and YMCA staff, the pilot project began in **July 2019!**

On the eve of **World Diabetes Day 2019**, DPRG Director, Dr. Mary Jung, and YMCA of Okanagan CEO, Sharon Peterson, signed an official **Memorandum of Understanding** solidifying their shared commitment to the partnership and announced the expansion of the Small Steps for Big Changes program to include the **H2O Adventure + Fitness Centre** site.

As a result of the partnership, the YMCA of Okanagan and DPRG have participated in numerous community engagement events and initiatives. A prediabetes assessment station has been added to the semi-annual **YMCA Senior Health Assessment Days** and a new **YMCA Adult Health Assessment Day** was created to promote awareness for diabetes prevention in the general community and promote the YMCA of Okanagan as a health-focused community center. DPRG staff, students and volunteers have also volunteered at YMCA events like the annual **YMCA Walk-A-Thon!**



"I feel like it was very inclusive. We've been included in different meetings and included in the two-year celebration, and that inclusion just made it feel like we were a part of it, almost like we were a part of it from the beginning in just that inclusion. And that was really nice."

- YMCA Coach



PARTNERSHIP OUTPUTS

Small Steps for Big Changes has impacted coaches, clients, and the broader academic community. Publications of success stories surfaced in the YMCA year-end report, DPRG newsletters, research articles, and presentations. A sample of these outputs are highlighted:

- ✓ Program alumni testimonial in the YMCA year end report (2019)
- ✓ Coach and client testimonials in every quarterly issue of DPRG newsletter since 2019
- ✓ SSBC coach, Jason, and program alumni, Lois, presented testimonials at [the 2nd Anniversary event](#)
- ✓ Program alumni, Lois, co-presented: [*You spoke, we listened \(and acted\): Continuing to support women with prediabetes in making behaviour changes post-intervention*](#), at the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology (SCAPPS) conference in Vancouver (2019)
- ✓ Karlene Sewell, co-presented: [*Engaging stakeholders in the process of embedding a type 2 diabetes prevention lifestyle program into a community setting: A collaborative approach*](#), at SCAPPS 2019
- ✓ Karlene Sewell, co-authored on [*A winning combination: Collaborating with stakeholders throughout the process of planning and implementing a type 2 diabetes prevention programme in the community*](#), in the *Journal of Health and Social Care in the Community*.
- ✓ Tineke Dineen (PhD candidate) co-authored on *Fitness facility staff demonstrate high fidelity when implementing an evidence-based diabetes prevention program*, submitted to Translational Behavioural Medicine (2020)
- ✓ Tineke Dineen (PhD candidate), co-authored on *Implementation of a diabetes prevention program within two community sites: A qualitative assessment*, submitted to Implementation Science (2020)



PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

The partnership between DPRG and the YMCA of Okanagan has led to 5 successful grant applications since 2018:

- ✓ 2018 Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Reach Grant to support planning SSBC pilot in the YMCA (\$10 000)
- ✓ 2019 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Engage Grant to support executing the YMCA pilot in two local sites with YMCA coaches (\$25 000)
- ✓ 2019 University of British Columbia Partnership Recognition Fund to support diabetes prevention awareness at YMCA Health Assessment Days (\$1500)
- ✓ 2020 University of British Columbia Partnership Recognition Fund to support a diabetes prevention series on YMCA at Home (\$1500)
- ✓ 2020 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's Partnership Engage grant to support planning and piloting a digital SSBC program (\$25 000)

TOTAL: \$63 000

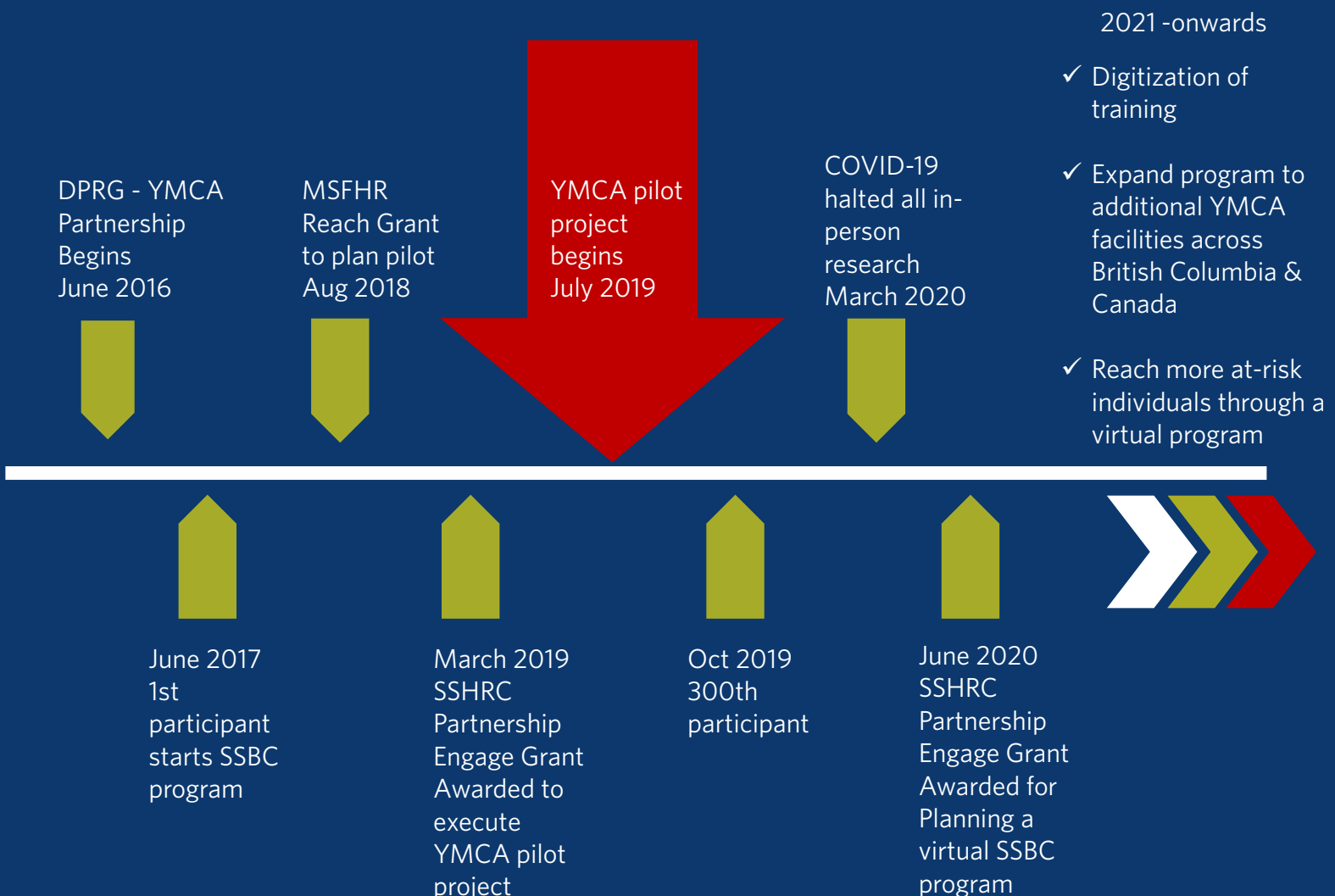


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TIMELINE

The remainder of this report will focus on the results from the YMCA pilot project where YMCA staff were trained and subsequently delivered the Small Steps for Big Changes Program at the Kelowna Downtown YMCA and Kelowna Family YMCA. This pilot project was supported by a SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant and ran from July 2019 – March 2020 prior to the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



PROGRAM REACH

August 2019 - March 2020

15 YMCA staff enrolled in SSBC training

└─→ **10** Coaches completed training and began taking clients

└─→ **2** Coaches had their training interrupted by COVID-19

└─→ **3** 2 YMCA staff and 1 YMCA volunteer did not complete training

- 1 new job
- 1 no longer a YMCA staff
- 1 new family commitments

45 Clients enrolled in SSBC

└─→ **36** Clients completed program

└─→ **6** Clients had their program interrupted by COVID-19

└─→ **3** Clients did not complete program

- 1 lost to follow-up
- 1 not the right time, too busy
- 1 wanted a weight-loss program

COACH FEEDBACK ON SSBC

"This program has done so, so much for not only my three participants, but for multiple participants that have been coming back to the Y and telling me how great this program is."
– YMCA Coach

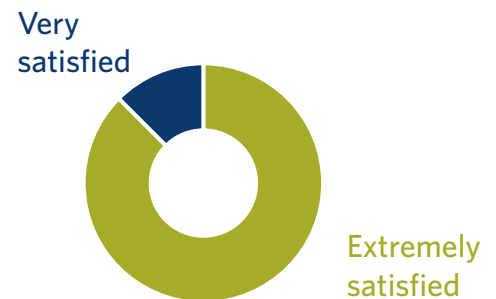
"I love what Small Steps brings to people."
– YMCA Coach

"It's been amazing. I love almost every single aspect about Small Steps. I truly believe people are able to change after our meetings that we have with them."
– YMCA Coach

By February 2020, 8 coaches had facilitated 3 or more clients through the program and participated in an interview and survey.

Overall usefulness of SSBC program:

Average = 6.88



Overall satisfaction of participating in SSBC:

Average = 6.63



Usefulness of having the program in a YMCA facility:

Average = 7



NOTE: Each scale is out of 7

CLIENT FEEDBACK ON SSBC

By February 2020, 20 clients had completed a post-program survey. Clients were asked to rate their satisfaction with the program.

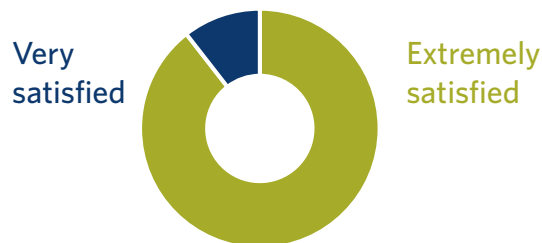
Overall experience in SSBC:

Average = 6.7



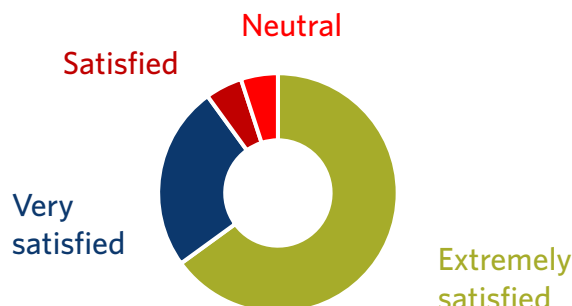
Their SSBC-YMCA coach:

Average = 6.9



Having the program in a YMCA facility:

Average = 6.5



NOTE: Each scale is out of 7

"[Coach] made me feel able to do anything! My life plan is to exercise and eat well."

- SSBC Client

"It was really good. Coach was really friendly, very knowledgeable, and listened to everything we had to say."

- SSBC Client

"I now have a goal for my life. The [coach] inspired me to make some small steps and big changes easily attained with their guidance. I am grateful for their help."

- SSBC Client

“

I really like getting to know the participant. It's very rare that we would spend this much 1-on-1 time with the same client for 3 weeks in a row. You really get to know them and really, really learn about them. It's not just the surface stuff. You really build a good relationship with these participants. I'm pretty sure if they keep coming to the Y, I'll stay connected with them for a long time. ”

- YMCA Coach

“

I like the fact that we try and get people to make a habit of coming to [SSBC]. Then the more emotional support. With the 1-on-1 [YMCA training], there's no emotional attachment with it. There's no extra support. I like the fact that this has a little bit of extra support for the people. ”

- YMCA Coach

“

You can make your plans, and it's a relatively short number of days that you have to actually do what you say you're going to do. So it's a little easier than if you only saw the individual once a month.

”

- SSBC Client

“

I thought it was helpful because now we've [coach and client] made a better relationship. When I go to YMCA, I see [coach] and I can just check in with her when I go to my class and bounce stuff off her still, as opposed to going through the regular channels. I thought that really was helpful.

”

- SSBC Client

“

I thought it [SSBC] was very good to get you kick-started and get you motivated and going. It was good to be followed by somebody I could ask questions, mostly about nutrition and various forms of exercise- and that new high-intensity thing. So for me, it [SSBC] was very useful.

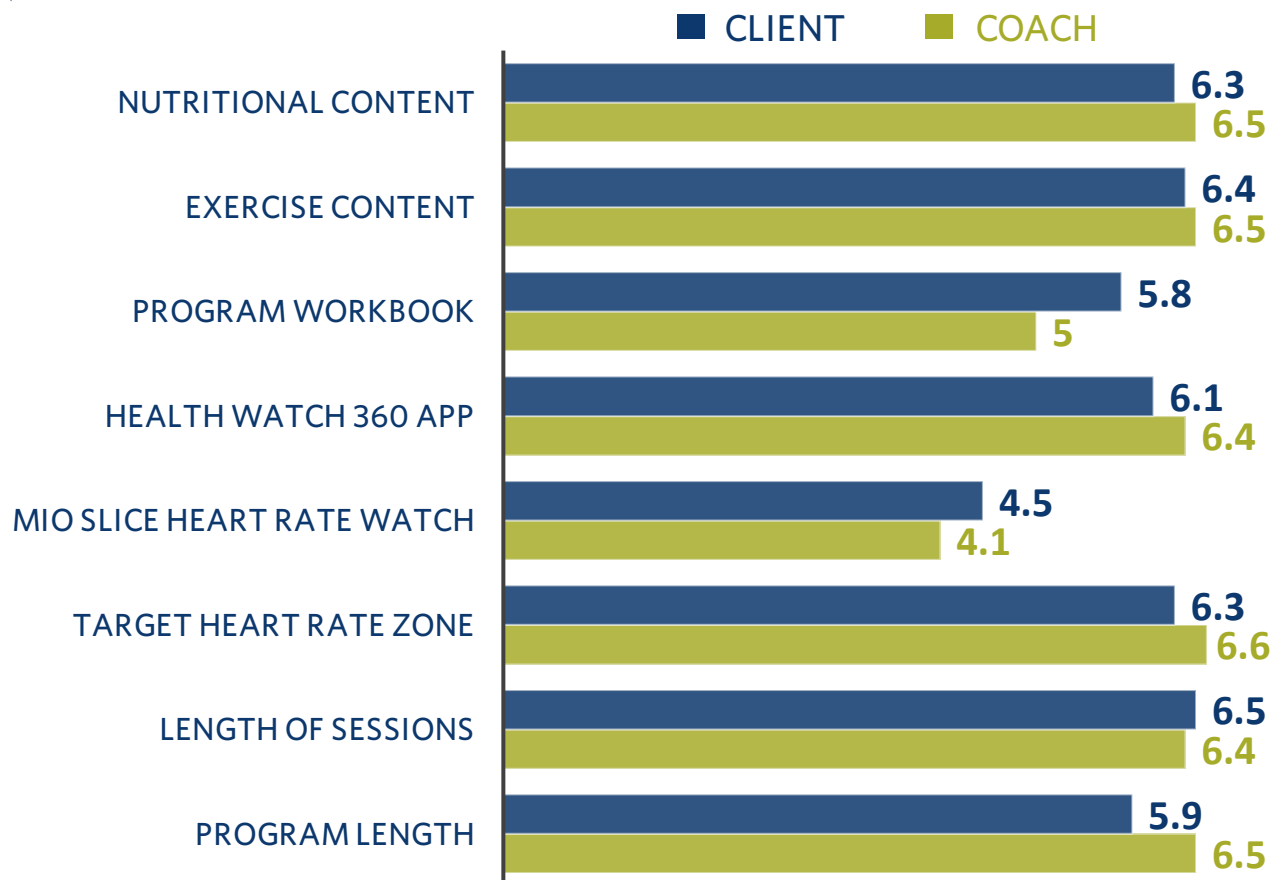
”

- SSBC Client

PROGRAM COMPONENTS



Various elements of the Small Steps for Big Changes program have been well-received among both coaches and clients.



NOTE: Each scale is out of 7



Based on interview feedback from clients and coaches, modifications have been made to the program workbook to increase usability. Additionally, the Mio Slice heart rate watch is no longer supported. Clients are encouraged to use their own personal heart rate watch, use the YMCA equipment heart rate sensors or work with their coaches to understand physical sensations to help them gauge their heart rate zones and different exercise intensities. Program length has been extended to four weeks.

YMCA COACH TIME



Coaches were allocated 90 minutes per session and 15 minutes of preparation time.

	Counselling time	Exercise time*	Total session time	Total preparation time
Session 1	44.5	12-20	88.3	18.8
Session 2	44.4	12-20	77.6	14.3
Session 3	40.9	12-20	73.2	14.2
Session 4	39.5	13.5-25	74.9	13.4
Session 5	35.0	13.5-25	69.9	12.5
Session 6	34.3	15-30	88.6	13.3
Overall (N=156)	39.8	N/A*	79.2	14.4

*Note: Exercise time is pre-determined through the program using the HIIT or MICT exercise progression protocol.

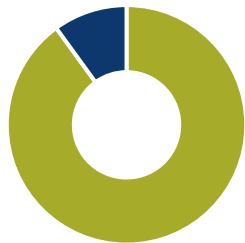


Many sessions are completed with time to spare! Counselling and exercise time management is appropriate. Based on feedback from YMCA coaches, program modifications (e.g. removal of the Mio Slice, pre/during/post blood pressure measures and reduction of final measurements) will reduce this time burden for all sessions, and specifically sessions 1 and 6, the longest sessions. In addition, a new 4-week program schedule will modify the spacing of sessions to help reduce weekly Small Steps for Big Changes time allotment for coaches.

YMCA COACH PROGRAM FIDELITY

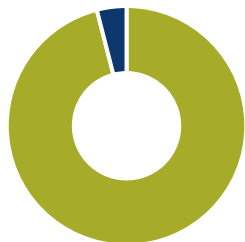
Are YMCA coaches running the program as intended?

"No thinking. No guesswork. You just look [at the checklist] and go."
- YMCA Coach



90% of all compulsory SSBC components were implemented by YMCA coaches

"I love the checklist so I know I can go through and be like: 'Okay. I got everything.' Instead of trying to keep a mental tally of things I have to talk about."
- YMCA Coach



95% of all checklist items were documented by YMCA coaches

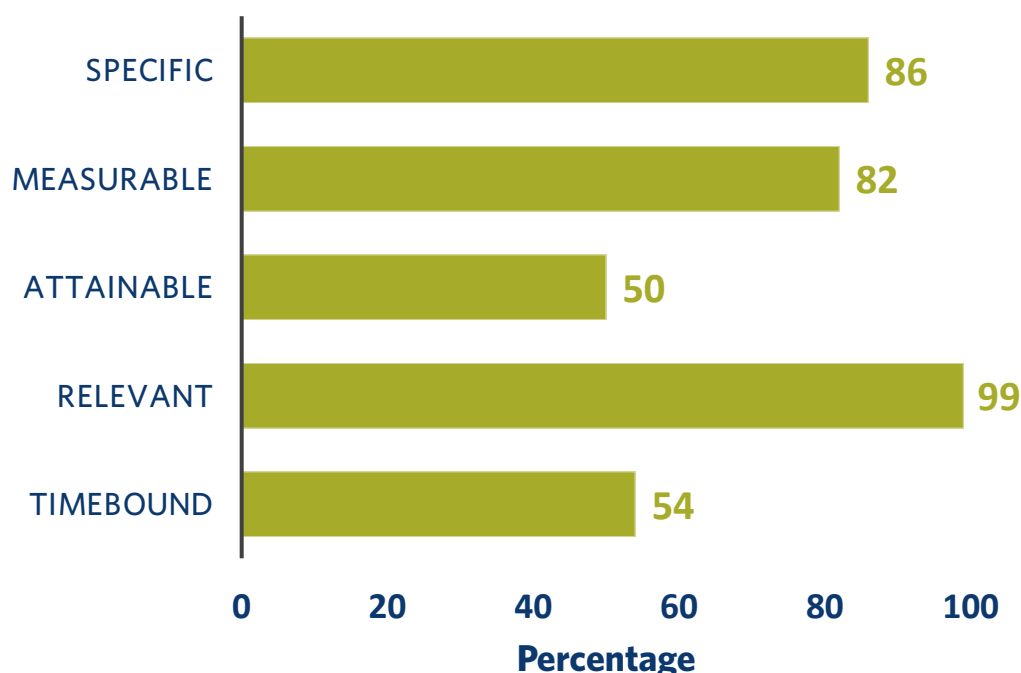
"The checklist is very helpful. It keeps us on track and makes sure we're crossing our Ts and dotting our Is."
- YMCA Coach



YMCA coaches are accurately reporting what they do in SSBC sessions. An external researcher cross-checked YMCA coaches' audio-recorded sessions and had **89%** agreement with what the YMCA coach had documented.

YMCA COACH GOAL SETTING FIDELITY

Are coaches setting SMART goals with their clients?



On average, coaches helped clients create goals in line with program content and program training. The average SMART score was 3.70/5 with a range of 1-5.

"It's connecting with people and using MI to help them realize how much they already know and assist them in making that plan to implement their knowledge. A lot of what we go over, everybody knows it, but how are they going to activate that knowledge and create change in their life based on it?"

- YMCA Coach

"Having something for clients to try to accomplish from appointment to appointment is helpful. Having them guide through themselves, what is a realistic goal for them? Asking: how do you feel being able to accomplish that [goal]?"

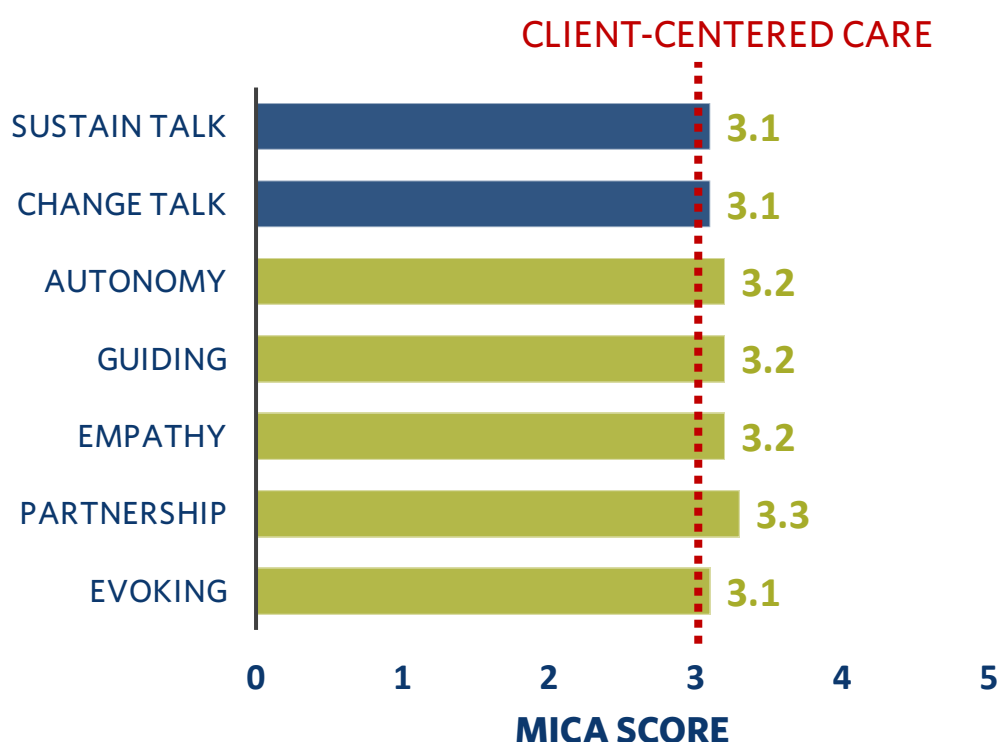
- YMCA Coach

YMCA COACH MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING FIDELITY

Are YMCA coaches using motivational interviewing in their sessions?

"When I do start to do more affirming, rather than responding back to what they're saying, I see them look at me differently, they feel more proud about themselves, I think."
– YMCA Coach

"There's definitely things that – are not MI that come out of my mouth. But I do think in general, I'm on board and I'm leading an MI counseling session with the participants... there's always going to be work for MI."
– YMCA Coach



DPRG analyses of recorded sessions between YMCA coaches and clients demonstrated strong use of MI counselling skills. Coaches consistently and proficiently used MI skills taught in DPRG's 3-day "train-the-trainer" workshop. Scores meeting "Client-Centred Care" criteria, as defined by the MI Coding Assessment (MICA) tool, indicated that YMCA coaches delivered Small Steps for Big Changes as the program was designed to be delivered. Further, this high degree of integrity and fidelity when delivering the SSBC program was maintained months after coaches completed the training.

THE POWER OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational Interviewing has impacted YMCA coaches. Coaches saw benefits of the counselling style in many aspects of their professional and personal life. Examples of benefits included:

- ✓ Conflict resolution
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Active listening
- ✓ Communicating with members and other coaches
- ✓ Use in individual training, group training

YMCA Small Steps for Big Changes Coaches see MI as a powerful tool that supported the program, encouraged behaviour change and helped coaches connect to clients. It is a skill that they used in all aspects of their job at the YMCA and in their personal life. However, it was also a challenging skill that took time and practice to build. Coaches turned to each other to practice MI, prepared MI statements ahead of sessions and wanted to continue to practice MI moving forward.



"What other gym are you going to get these opportunities to learn all these different skills."
- YMCA Manager



"It's further education for our trainers. It's very impactful the way we speak to people, I think it makes such a difference in helping them change. So that is a huge benefit."
- VP of Health Fitness and Aquatics

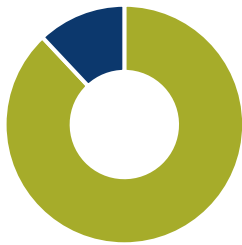
"Those MI skills take you out of the picture and puts them [client] in the spotlight."
- SSBC Coach

"The ability to communicate with someone better, to understand them and connect and feel connected, as well as understood, is really important."
- SSBC Coach

"It's [MI] a tool that everyone should have some experience with."
- SSBC Coach

"It's [MI] really made a difference with, not just Small Steps, but with other clients that I'm working with as well."
- SSBC Coach

A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY



88% of YMCA coaches have:

- 1) Provided practical support to other YMCA coaches
- 2) Received help from their managers in applying SSBC

YMCA Small Steps for Big Changes coaches mentioned teamwork and camaraderie among the SSBC coaches. Coaches had to work together at times to make the schedule work, supported each other with clients and even practiced MI skills on each other.

"We are all in this together."

- YMCA Coach

"Communication is the thing that's going to lead to the most success in a program like this. If we're able to openly communicate, get questions answered, and collaborate on problem-solving, that's always going to be the best."

- YMCA Coach



"We MI each other in the staff rooms...it's fun, I really like it."

- YMCA Coach

MEMBERSHIP AND REFERRALS



Upon completing Small Steps for Big Changes, nearly **80%** of clients self-reported that they were:

- 1) Pre-existing YMCA members;
- 2) Are now YMCA members; or
- 3) Want to be a YMCA member.

28% Planned to continue their pre-existing YMCA membership

28% Purchased a YMCA membership

22% Reported choosing not to exercise in a gym setting

17% Planned to become a YMCA member

6% Reported living too far away, otherwise would have joined the YMCA

Clients in the YMCA Small Steps for Big Changes pilot self-reported if they referred anyone to the YMCA after participating in the SSBC program.

- **59%** of respondents referred someone to the YMCA.
- On average, each referee referred **3** individuals.



PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Small Steps for Big Changes clients have significantly improved on various health markers after completing the program.

Published peer-reviewed results ([Bean et al., 2020](#)) demonstrated that the program has a **95% completion rate**. On average, at 6-months post program, SSBC clients:



Lost **3.35kg**



Lost **4.16 cm** around their waist



Walked **31.94m** further on a walk-test

Self-reported exercise:

Clients reported the number of 30-min light, moderate, and vigorous exercise bouts engaged in during the past week using a validated questionnaire. Responses are calculated into MET (Metabolic equivalent) scores using: active = 24+, moderately active = 24-14, insufficiently active = <14. On average, at 6-months post-program, SSBC clients:



Gained **13.7 METs**



An average gain in 13.7 METs from pre-program to 6-months post-program demonstrates that Small Steps for Big Changes can help clients move from insufficiently active to moderately active!

"In the past, it's always been about body image. I've done lots of exercise programs, but I've never stuck to them in the long-term. So it's like looking at achieving your short-term goal verses having a long-term objective. This my lifestyle, this is how I'm going to achieve that. It's a very different perspective. It's made me more relaxed, more forgiving of myself; I don't feel regimented or regulated. I'm just making healthy choices."

– SSBC Client 12-months post-program

"We change things up a bit- one day of walking, the other snowshoe- to match the season and the intensity... The intensity is a big part of it. I always make sure that we schedule in some pretty tough hill walks."

– SSBC Client 12-months post-program

DIETARY MODIFICATIONS

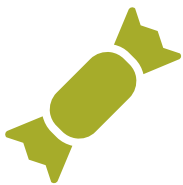
In addition to health markers, Small Steps for Big Changes clients have significantly improved self-reported dietary behaviours in line with program goals.

Published peer-reviewed results ([Bean et al., 2020](#)) demonstrated, on average, 6-months post program, SSBC clients:

Consumed more fruits, and even more vegetables:



Consumed less sweets, bread, white rice, pasta and refined carbohydrates:



NOTE: The effectiveness data presented on page 22 and 23 are not from the YMCA pilot. As this report shows, YMCA coaches implemented the program with high fidelity. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect similar outcomes for YMCA clients in the pilot. Future research will be conducted to confirm this.

"This program has taught me to be a lot more conscious. My friends offered me cereal: 'I know you like cereal' – Pop Tarts, Cheerios, and Frosted Flakes. I said no. I haven't done sugar cereal for 2 years now, I do always watch that."

– SSBC Client 12-months post-program

"Who knew there was so much [sugar in] juice-- or so much sugar in yogurt? If anything, I'm probably paying more attention to labels before I go to buy something because I am surprised at how much sugar is in things that I would never have thought there was so much sugar in. The Small Steps program has been absolutely amazing for that."

– SSBC Client 12-months post-program

SUSTAINABILITY IN A YMCA SETTING

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Build capacity for serving more clients

"With this type of program we are probably only going to be able to implement at the most six, if one trainer had a client per month, so now you're looking at serving twenty to twenty five people down to only serving 6 per month"

- YMCA Manager

"Opening up to members could be a potential barrier with capacity but I also think that if we put a little bit more guidelines in who would go in, who needs it."

- YMCA Manager

"I still think even if you left it as pre-diabetes and the risk assessment ... I think we'd be able to serve the amount of people that we want to serve."

- SSBC Coach

Support SSBC coaches

"It's not like it's overly challenging content if you're in the industry already. It should be relatively easy to pick up, but you may need to ask for help or support."

- YMCA VP Fitness and Aquatics

"I think that is on us as management and [site] leads, is to encourage them. Because I had that talk with (coach), but I know (coach) can handle that content. It's just helping them and pulling them off the cliff, right? I think it just comes down to us motivating them, supporting them [SSBC coaches]."

- YMCA Manager

Modify/remove program components

"By the time they get their stuff together and you get on the bike you have them wait five extra minutes at the end of their work out to do blood pressure like it just adds up to an hour and a half even though the counselling doesn't go over."

- SSBC Coach

"Mios, trying to get it to work. "

- SSBC Coach

ACTIONS:

✓ Increase the number of trained YMCA SSBC coaches

✓ Screen clients for program to ensure fit with behaviour change program over an individual training session

✓ Increase support for YMCA-SSBC coaches through having a YMCA manager and YMCA-SSBC site lead have check-ins with YMCA-SSBC coaches

✓ Provide a site lead training

✓ Remove Mio Slice HR watch

✓ Remove pre/during/post blood pressure

✓ Reduce number of pre- and post-program measurements

SUSTAINABILITY IN A YMCA SETTING

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Modify program schedule

"I would definitely say the changes to scheduling like spreading out the appointments. I think that would have a huge impact on our trainers and who could lead the program and how it effects their schedule throughout the week."

- SSBC Coach

Anyone at the YMCA can be a SSBC coach

"I think anyone could implement it."

- SSBC Coach

"I'd question if they don't want to do this are they interested in even doing IT's [individual training appointments] or coach approaches. Like I would be wondering if it's the right job or right place ... when we hire people too in the future it's really about understanding what their goals are too, right?"

- VP Fitness and Aquatics

"There should be no reason why somebody opts out [of SSBC training] from our group."

- YMCA Manager 1

Build YMCA staff buy-in

"Incorporate it [SSBC meetings] into your staff meetings, like just a quick update if everybody's a small steps coach "

- SSBC Coach

"Bringing it up and updating on small steps and get those already doing it to talk about their experiences with their clients, because they've all been very positive from my understanding and just letting people know like this is the future of YMCA, this is the future appointment type. "

- YMCA Manager

Replace coach approach

"Even twice a week though you're getting way more support than we ever did with the coach approach...Coach approach is once a month and I feel like that's a bit of a flaw to it. I think that's the only reason we lost a lot of people. "

- YMCA Manager

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Extend the 6 sessions over 4 weeks instead of 3 weeks (maximum 2 sessions per week)

- ✓ Implement new program schedule to enable part-time YMCA staff, casual YMCA staff and YMCA volunteers to enrol in SSBC training

- ✓ Screen potential new hires for YMCA values and fit

- ✓ Replace YMCA-DPRG SSBC meetings with adding a SSBC section during monthly YMCA staff meetings

- ✓ Share coach success stories and client impacts

- ✓ Incorporate SSBC into YMCA programming

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES



Difficulties

Full appointments, workload

Learning motivational
interviewing skills

Connecting to clients

Fostering personal &
professional development

Helping clients change

Facilitating teamwork

SSBC is unique from other
YMCA programs



Benefits

MOVING FORWARD

The goal of this pilot project was to co-facilitate the transition of a behaviour change lifestyle counselling program for people at risk for type two diabetes into a sustainable community program. Thus far, the program has been well received among clients and coaches at the YMCA. The training was effective with YMCA coaches successfully implementing the program with fidelity and at a client-centered level of motivational interviewing. Based on the results and feedback from this pilot project, the program will be modified to increase the fit within a YMCA structure. From the success of this pilot project, the program will expand to new locations. An all-inclusive YMCA program will be piloted at the H2O Adventure and Fitness Centre having YMCA staff complete all program tasks from intake to 12-month follow-up. This pilot will provide valuable feedback on the structure to be used to expand to all future locations either in British Columbia or across Canada.

Program modifications:

- ✓ Client workbook
- ✓ Program schedule
- ✓ Program measurements
- ✓ In-session blood pressure protocols
- ✓ Incorporate SSBC meetings within larger YMCA staff meetings

Short-term initiatives:

- ✓ Digitize training to increase sustainability
- ✓ Develop site-lead training and program support materials
- ✓ Expand to H2O Adventure + Fitness Centre with all-inclusive YMCA program
- ✓ Pilot virtual program

Long-term initiatives:

- ✓ Expand to other YMCAs across British Columbia and Canada
- ✓ Expand reach by providing virtual program options



