

CONNECT2CARE . BC

Mountainside Harm Reduction Society is a local non-profit society, that is directed and operated by people with lived and living experience with mental health & substance use.

Our C2CBC program provides access to smart phones for our peers, who are struggling across the province. Our team of peer support workers provides monthly check-ins for each participant while paying their monthly cell phone bill in a manner that is low-no barrier.



MOUNTAINSIDE
Harm Reduction Society



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Provincial Partnerships

Mountainside Harm Reduction Society's take on the Connect2Care program is unique in that we were able to utilize our powerful provincial network of peer support specialists who represent numerous non-profit societies and other organizations which are founded and operated, exclusively by and for people who use(d) drugs (PWUD). PWUD or People with lived & living experience with concurrent mental health & substance use Experience (PWLLE) are increasingly active on the front lines of the province's toxic drug supply crisis. Peer support workers take care of their own in ways that are unparalleled by service providers who do not share experiential expertise. This grassroots network is perfectly situated to take on collectively benefiting projects like this cell phone program. This network of expertise can execute programming such as this in a manner that is both efficient and effective. The best part of this program was that it embodied the very concept of this provincial network, while strengthening existing partnerships. MSHRS was able to distribute 250 smart phones across all 5 health authority regions in BC, in under 6 months. All while providing micro-budget offerings of cash honoraria to the hands of colleagues and allies working front-line overdose prevention and response.

"THIS CELL PHONE HAS ALLOWED ME TO START GETTING MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER" - ZOE, 28 (CHILLIWACK, BC)

Partnership Contracts & Packages

Each of our partners connected with our Connect2CareBC (C2CBC) Coordinator to go over the step-by-step guide to facilitating this program as a MSHRS partner or contractor. Once the partner had agreed to the terms outlined by MSHRS they signed an agreement. Once the agreement was signed our C2CBC Coordinator would package up 5 cell phones, mail them out and provide the partner with tracking #! When the phones arrived at their destination we would send a budget breakdown along with \$450 in the Spring & \$400 in the Summer to each partner. This mini-grant allowed our partnered peer support workers to be paid \$20/her for 2 hours per phone, 1hour for distribution and 1 hour for survey facilitation. In the spring, the other \$250 was 5x \$50 stipend for the recipient of the cell phone to participate in a short paid research survey that allowed for structured feedback about our projects' reception, progress and outcome! In the summer, we scrapped the survey and decided to give \$25 cash to each participant for their time filling out our form.

Partnerships

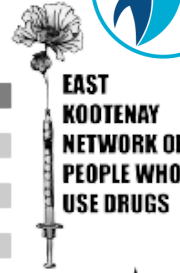
We have a range of program partners across BC, which include local service providers and non-profit societies, various peer-led organizations by & for PWUD and individual freelance peer support workers. Some partners we engaged in the the springtime were not very successful. However, some of our spring partners received a second round of phones this summer, and we also founded some brand new partnerships this fall.

- Spring
- Spring & Summer
- Summer



PCRS
Thriving, healthy communities

Partnred Organization	Region	Peer Support Worker
Ruth & Naomi's Mission	FHA - Chilliwack	Dave Waltho
Briging the Gap	VIHA - Port Alberni	Brandy Reynolds
Hope & Area Transition Soceity (HATS)	FHA - Hope	Megan Walter
AAPI- Autonmous Accountable Peer Initiative	FHA - Chilliwack	Connie Long
Solutions DUG	FHA - Chilliwack	Randi-lynn Hayes
NorthernSun Helpers	NHA - Fort St. John	Troy & Pam Romanow
CSUN - Coalition of Substance Users of the North	NHA - Quesnel	Charlene Burmeister
SNOW - Society for Narcotic Opioid Wellness	NHA - Dawson Creek/FtStJ Lyric Parnham	
i2i Peer Support - Gibsons	VCH - Gibsons	Brian mackenzie
MOCAT - Mission Overdose Community Action Team - SAFE	FHA - Mission/Deroche	Lawrence (Zeek)
UNDU - United Northern Drug Users & UNDUIng Stigma	NHA - Prince George	Katt Cadieux - UNDU & Sarah Ferry
REDUN - Rural Empowered Drug Users Network	IHA - Nelson Grand Forks/ Trail/ Castlegar	Amber Streukens
KANDU - Knowledging All Nations & Developing Unity	IHA - Kelowna	Heather Spence
PCRS - Pacific Communiy Resources Society	FHA - Chilliwack	Jodi Higgs & Shaun Nygard
EKNPUD - East Kootenay Network of Drug Users	IHA - Cranbrook	Jess Lamb & James Kaufman
PUNK - Peers United Network of Knowledge	VIHA - Nanaimo	Amber McGrath
VANDU - Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users BCA POM - BC Association of People on Opioid Maintenance	VCH - DTES Vancouver	Hannah Dempsey & Laura Shaver
ANKORS - Aids Network Kootenay Outreach, Resources & Support Soc	IHA - Nelson	Holly Trider
Matsqui-Abbotsford Impact Society - Abbotsford Drug War Survivors	FHA - Abbotsford	Brittany Maple
Matsqui-Abbotsford Impact Society - VYPOR - Visionary Youth Peers for (Visionary Youth Peers for Equity & Revitalization)	FHA - Abbotsford	Marcella Sunshine (Pruden)
BC3S - BC Solid Support Society	FHA - Mission	Sho (Terry) Murray
CVSO - Comox Valley Street Outreach Society	VIHA - Cumberland	David Clarke
SOLID - Society of Living Injection Drug Users	VIHA - Victoria	Jack Philips
CPDDW - Coalition of Peers Dismantling the Drug War	VCH - Vancouver	Kali Sedgemore
SARA for Women	FHA - Abbotsford	Robin Mendoca
Raven's Moon Transition Society	FHA - Abbotsford	Luis Mendoca



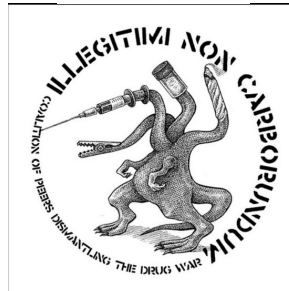
CSUN
COALITION of SUBSTANCE USERS of the NORTH



VANDU



Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users



Hope & Area
TRANSITION SOCIETY



Extended Partnerships

As you can see from the table on the previous page, we had several new program partnerships created in September. Many of our partners from the first round received a second round of phones. Megan Walter at HATS and Dave Waltho at Ruth and Naomi's each got 10 more, as they are both closely connected to us at Mountainside and work with countless vulnerable folks in our home region. EKNPUD in Cranbrook also got 10 more. Other groups who were given a second cohort of 5 cell phones with stipend packages of \$400, included:

- VANDU, Hannah Dempsey
- CSUN, Charlene Burmeister
- UNDU, Katt Cadieux
- AAPI, Connie
- REDUN, Amber
- SNOW, Lyric Parnham
- I2i - Brian and Ken

PCRS & Raven's Moon

Over two dozen phones have been distributed by our colleagues and friends at Pacific Community Resources Society. Tanis works closely with PCRS through her other job as Coordinator of the Chilliwack Community Action Team. Their substance use & housing programs, as well as their outreach team have significantly benefitted from this program.

We have been advertising our phone program on our Mountainside website for several months, and were finally approached through the website by an inhabitant of Raven's Moon Resources Society, in Abbotsford. He brought our program to the attention of the Coordinator of one of the transitional housing sites, and we ended up bringing cell phones for two of their elderly residents who are in recovery from substance use and also struggle with developmental disorders. This led us to purchase two slightly more advanced phones, as we felt that the more primitive MaxWest handsets would have been considerably challenging for these two folks to use. We had two SIM cards left over from the first round to put into those, so that worked out perfectly!

Partners & Participants

Many of our partners already had plans for their cell phone recipients, making the process for them very easy once the phones arrived. This also clearly showcased a common need for basic communication devices across each health authority region in BC. Our contracted peer support workers had their recipients fill out basic participant agreements that outlined the program logistics. The low barrier option for getting these forms back to our C2C coordinator was to ask our partners to snap photos of the completed form and send them back to us immediately so that we could activate the distributed device onto a monthly plan.

Example Partner Contract



Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
Connect 2 Care,BC - Partner Contract

This document outlines the agreement between Mountainside HRS and any organization or individual that is partnering with us to facilitate the Connect2Care program.

By signing below, I - **NAME/ORGANIZATION** - agree to these terms and conditions, laid out by Mountainside Harm Reduction Society:

- I will provide timely and effective distribution of **5** smart phones for the Connect2Care,BC program.
- *****I will provide Mountainside with each complete & signed participant contract - immediately following the distribution of each phone.*****
- I will connect with program participants, within 1 month of initial distribution, to encourage connection to peer support and do my best to help Mountainside efficiently facilitate monthly check-ins and plan top-ups.
- I will equitably distribute the funds (**\$400**) that I receive along with my package of cell phones. I understand that this money is both for my own time as a facilitator of this program, travel expenses as a peer support worker and to give participants a \$25 cash honorarium upon receiving their phone. (See "C2CBC Budget Breakdown")
- I will remain in close contact with Mountainside to express any concerns, questions, and recommendations that I have for the purpose of removing barriers to access and improving this program!

Signature: _____

Name:	
Organization:	
Location/HA:	Date:

Example Participant Contract



Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
Connect 2 Care,BC - Participant Contract

This document outlines the agreement between Mountainside Harm Reduction Society and each individual program participant who receives a new cell phone for their personal and/or professional use as a PWUD/PWLE.

Please initial each of the following & sign below:

- I will alert my C2CBC partner and/or Mountainside of my need for any technological assistance with my device.
- I will connect with my C2CBC partner organization and/or Mountainside at the end of each billing cycle (30days) to inform them that I am still using this phone, I know that if I do not answer the monthly check-in text messages for any reason, that my phone bill may not get paid!
- I will continue to connect with the C2CBC program facilitators with any concerns or questions that I may have. **I understand that I now have a support system that can help connect me to resources and services that I may need to enhance my overall wellbeing!**
- I have received a \$25 cash stipend upon receiving my new smart phone! Thank-you!

Signature: _____

Name:
Date:

- **The following two numbers can be found on the inside of your phones box, in sharpie:**

C2C,BC - Phone ID#

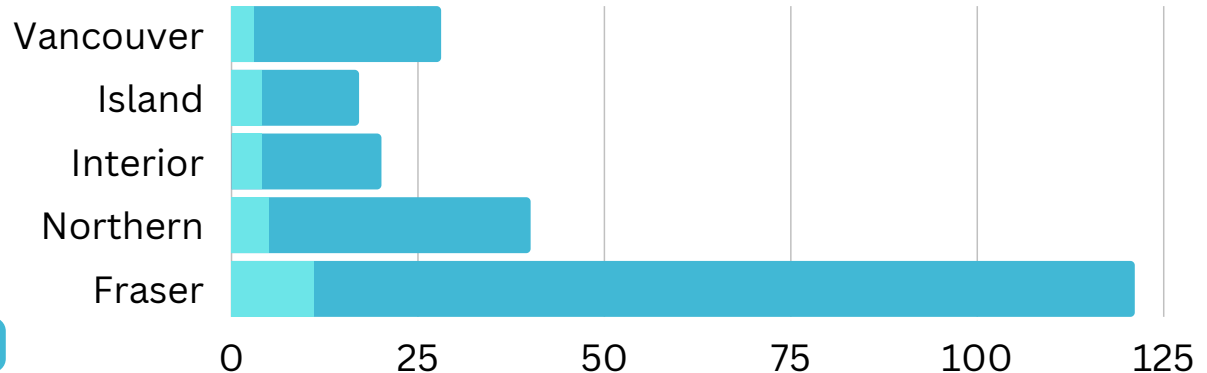
PHONE #:

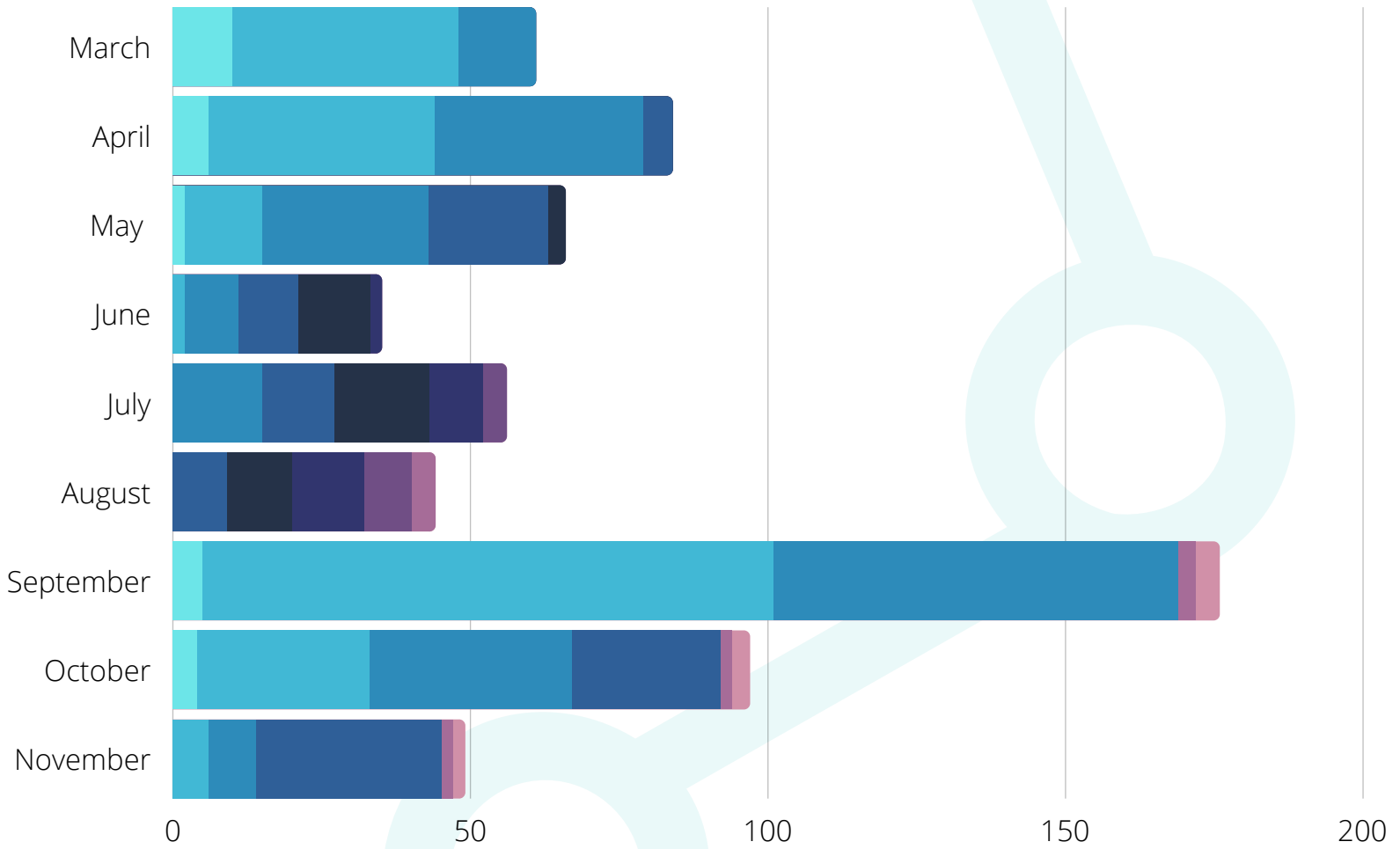


Partners



Participants





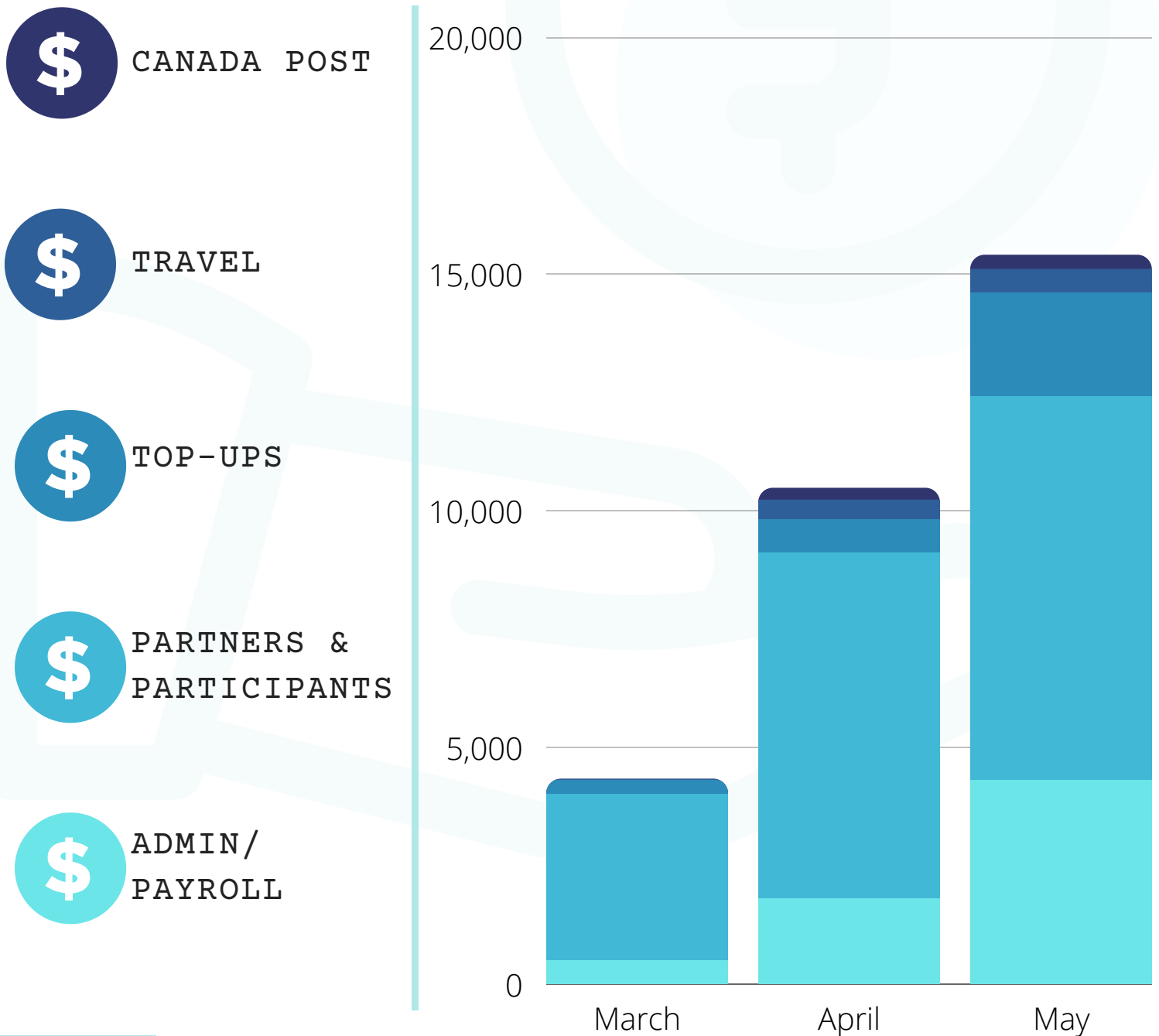
-  Partnerships Formed
-  Phones Distributed
-  Activated on Plan
-  2nd Month on Plan
-  3rd Month on Plan
-  4th Month on Plan
-  5th Month on Plan
-  6th Month on Plan
-  7th Month on Plan

We found that about 40% of participants were available when we checked in after 1 month to top-up their 2nd month on the plan, and after the 2nd month only about 7% of participants responded to continue a 3rd month on the program's plan. 6 months after the initial distribution of 100 phones, we have about 4 program participants who remain. This method of deduction has fruited several alumni program participants who have proven themselves capable of caring for a device for an extended time. Check Ins with these folks also show us who truly appreciates the opportunity we have given them and they also utilize the peer support aspect of our program. We would like to be able to upgrade their devices ASAP! One man managed to get his own upgrade, a previously loved iPhone 6, and switch his SpeakOut program SIM into it.

Summary of First Round Spending

\$15,000

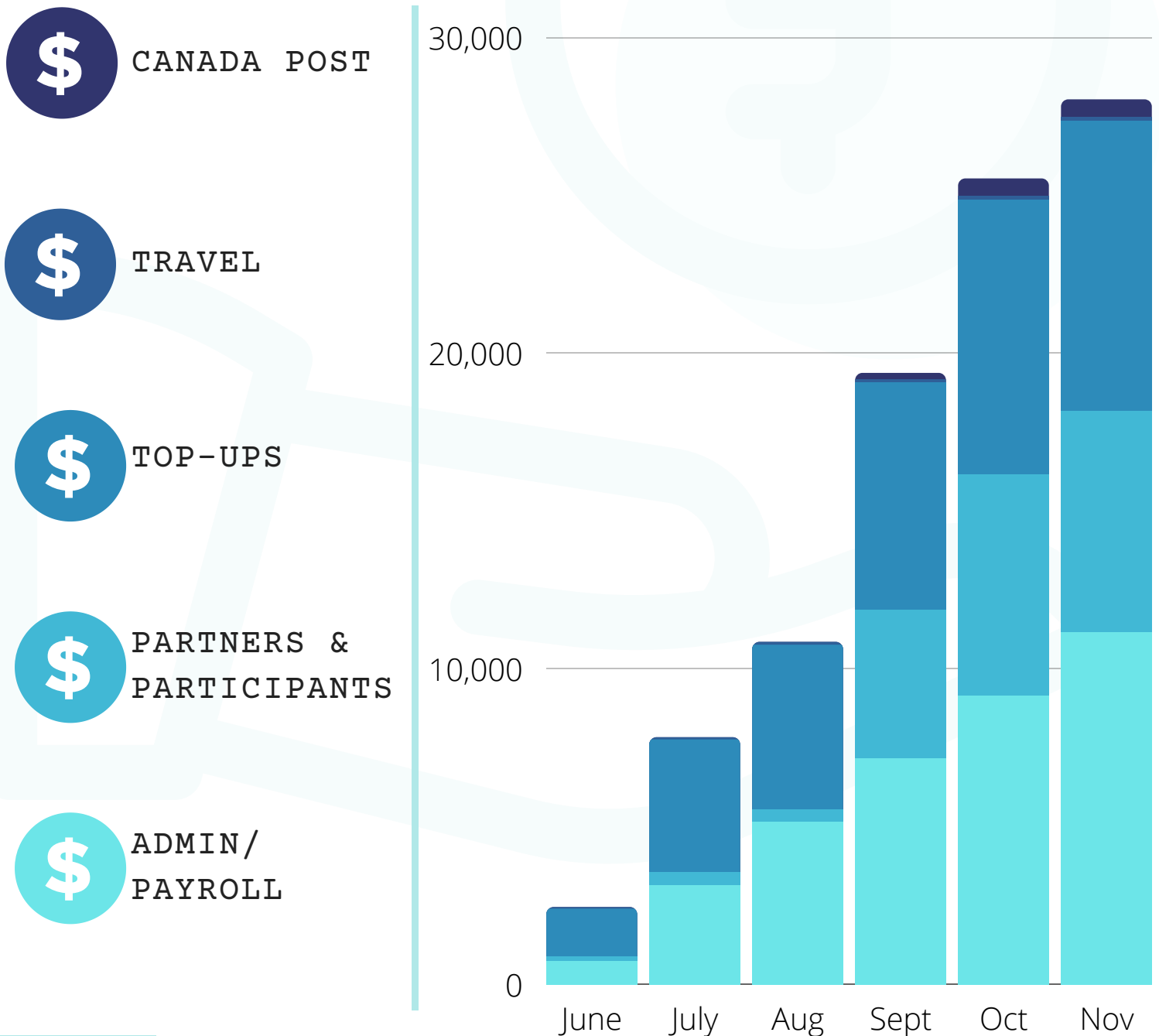
We were able to get phones and cash into the hands of our 20 partners and about 90 participants within the course of 3 months! Our part-time project coordinator is also Vice-President of MSHRS's board of directors and someone with lived and living experience; this income has helped him to flourish this spring. Most of our budget went to our partners, with the next highest spending to our coordinator, other expenses included topping up with SpeakOut, travel for delivering phones locally, and charges from Canada Post for mailing packages across the province.



Summary of Second Round Spending

\$35,00

As per our agreement with SPARC, our second round of funding was split largely between 3 budgeted areas: payroll - for our program coordinators part-time wages, partner & participant stipends as well as 711 SpeakOut top-ups! This round of distribution has been a huge success and we are finding that the turnover or return rate on folks engaging after the first month is about the same. We will continue with the program until we have whittled down that participants to just a few stable folks - when we hope to obtain upgraded devices for them! We have plans to try to lobby large cell companies to help us continue this program in some form or another!



Although the majority of our feedback responses were overwhelmingly positive, there were a few caveats

Some of the participants would have appreciated a more durable or technologically advanced phone, particularly younger recipients. A few phones were broken accidentally, five were stolen, and two were confiscated by the police, one of which was after the participant suffered a fatal overdose.

Due to the intricacies of the SpeakOut program legalese, consistent funds are hemorrhaging from the program.. the way they structure their buying of minutes and implementation of plans, and charge for overages of data without adequate notice.

Overall, the majority of participants reported a noticeable increase in their quality of life with a free smartphone, that there's no question the program can be counted a success. Several participants even got into detox and treatment, built or mended relations with family members, acquired employment, scheduled counselling, doctor's appointments, and in at least one case avoided jail time because their probation officer could reach them by phone!

Keep truckin

We are still receiving emails from partners on a daily basis, giving us the name of a new participant for whom we can activate their phone. We are also right in the middle of a very busy time, there are several weeks during the month where check ins are dense as these days mark 30-day anniversaries of activated phones. This is when we must reach out to each participant prior to topping-up their account. As phones are lost, broken, or just drift off the program due to non-engagement, these periods of density will inevitably be whittled down again, but for now we are calling and texting dozens of phones per week.

We have decided to hold back a dozen or so phones to give away to community members that we come in contact with through our drug checking & peer support programs.

We have heard from numerous folks across the province, both partners and participants, about the profound changes in quality of life that access to a cell phone has made for various folks.

Connect2Care Mountainside & Moving Forward

Over the past 9 months we distributed smart phones to over 200 individuals. Our connection with these program participants ranges from still in regular contact with this person, having paid their bill for eight months now - to - having heard the recipient traded the phone to a dealer on the first night they had it or that the participant through it at a wall when they got mad that it wouldn't work fast enough. Overall, we believe that the program was a huge success; we gave as many folks as possible a chance at having a communication device, and those who took care of the device and connected with us, we consider to be the pinnacle of our success. The turnover rate is, unfortunately, high - but those who remain on the program - are grateful and hopeful for the program to continue on.

This cell phone program is near and dear to our hearts at Mountainside - for our very first year of profound, organizational growth - this program allowed us to work on something tangible and rewarding! We fully intend to continue with it until the very last dollar has been spent on participant phone bills. The folks who truly value and treasure the phones are so happy and so grateful for the improvement to their quality of life, it vastly outweighs the depressing downside, when we hear the phone was stolen, or traded away, or broken in a fit of rage. But we are trying to help a distinctly vulnerable population and if it were easy, the crisis would be over by now. In that sense, we are still helping people, whereby every extra month with a phone is an opportunity to stay connected to loved ones, apply for jobs, housing, disability, or even just have some extra entertainment watching videos on YouTube with their 2GB data.

We found that people in more remote communities were definitely the most careful with their handsets; people in more urban settings where extra resources are available didn't seem to value them as much. We found that single mothers, or people with some sobriety time, were much more likely to have some program longevity. We set up the best possible program we could with the resources provided, definitely registering every number possible on the same account made for vastly easier tracking and payment options. At the same time, we will be applying for more funding or rebuilt handsets from other charities and/or service providers in an effort to keep this program going, even in a smaller or renewed capacity.