

Recovery Colleges: International Expertise and Leadership



Habitus Collective represents leaders from every stage of Recovery College development and delivery. From problem identification, planning, and fundraising, to operationalisation, embedding peer support, and impact, evaluation, and research.

Habitus is an innovative research, strategy, and evaluation consultancy with a focus on supporting non-profit agencies to understand complex social issues, demonstrate impact, and identify strategic and programmatic opportunities. Since our inception we have worked with over 30 organisations in Canada and the UK, across sectors such as mental health, immigration, addiction, urban development, gender, HIV, and poverty. These projects have spanned the lifecycle of programming and have given Habitus an in-depth knowledge around program development, evaluation, and strategy.

Our team has considerable experience in project management, evaluation, research design and analysis, program design, data analysis, and strategic planning. To each of our projects we bring **subject matter expertise**, a strong evaluative thinking framework, and a focus on knowledge utilization and mobilisation.

Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods we work from a strengths-based perspective that builds on the capacities of our project partners. Our goal is to use evaluation as a platform to **foster co-creation** of knowledge and outputs. This includes training, co-learning strategies and co-building tools and frameworks that can address both immediate needs and **strategic long-term interests**.

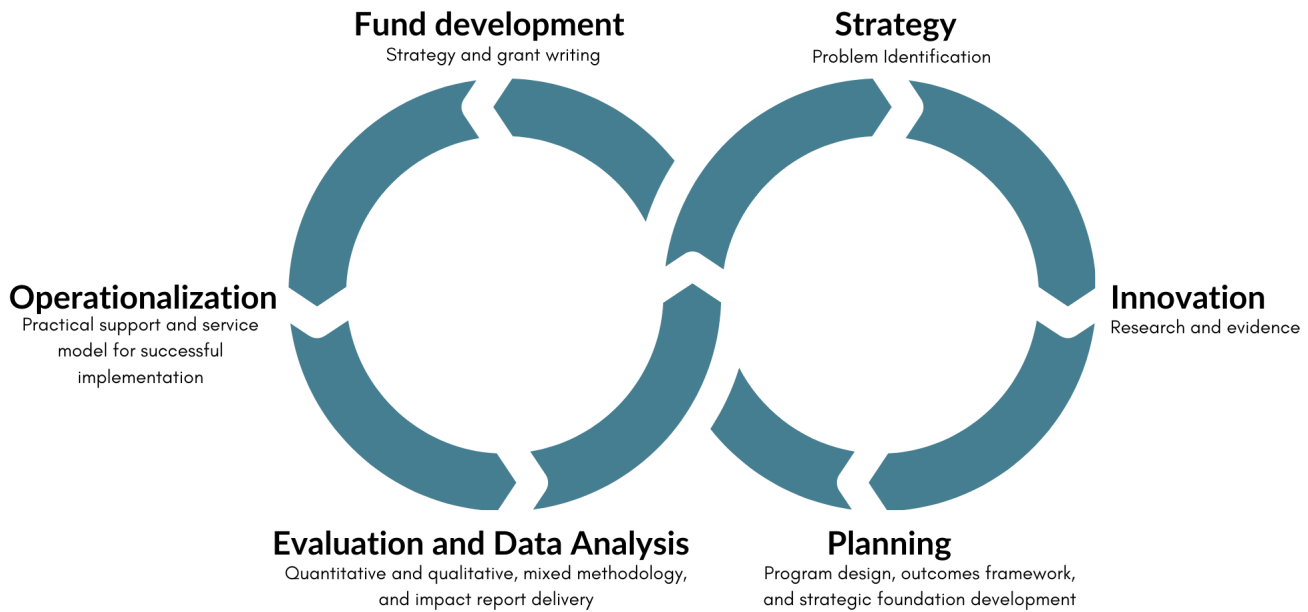
We have **relevant and up-to-date theoretical and evidence-based knowledge** from learning from sites in the UK and working with sites across Canada. We have **analysed the data and journeys of over 4,500 users** of Recovery Colleges. We have a demonstrated ability to implement an extensive stakeholder engagement processes and successfully scale complex projects across multiple sites, working with each locality to learn, adapt, and successfully implement a new service.

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Recovery Colleges and Peer Support Practice Areas

One of our key strengths lies in our vast experience of working in the area of Peer Support in mental health and substance use. As evaluators to the largest Recovery College and School of Peer Support in Canada, and a key partner of this **scaling project** across Canada, our team has significant knowledge and expertise around the operational, strategic and evaluation aspects of delivering this work at scale. This includes **measuring the individual, community, and systems level impacts** in the community, and understanding the tailored approaches and needs of small centres and rural adoption vs larger urban centres.



Strategy and innovation

Having two of the **co-creators** of the adoption, spread, and scale of a **completely open-access community-based Recovery Colleges** in Canada in the Habitus partnership, gives us a deep understanding of the organisational needs and strains that implementing a Recovery College has at a local level. Through our own learning of creating Recovery Colleges, we know the **routes to success and impact for other onboarding sites**. Having worked with delivery sites in the UK, we have the knowledge, evidence, and research to ensure the key elements of what makes Recovery Colleges successful are incorporated into new sites. We also have a model developed and **evidence for the adoption of open-access Recovery Colleges across the world**.

Planning and project management

Through our work we have successfully supported with the planning and program management of scaling Recovery College across multiple geographical regions and health authorities. During this process, we have developed: a strategic framework, **evidence for best practices**, qualitative data measurement and survey design, **peer mentorship framework**, curriculum review processes, and engaged with students to **co-create impact measurements**. We are leading the scaling, practice support, and evaluation of new sites as well as mobilising knowledge and learning so new sites can establish themselves.

Business Development

Habitus has worked with sites across Canada to help them fund Recovery Colleges and **embed sustainability** into the service model. Partners in Habitus were able to launch the largest Recovery College in Canada through working with existing funders and foundations to **reallocate existing funds** and required no additional funding to succeed. The eventual breadth and scale at which it was able to grow, was due to funder interest in the model attracting new funding. Habitus recognises that this may not be an option for all sites looking to adopt Recovery College and has been successful in supporting sites in **applying for and attracting new funding** to implement their College.

Scaling and model building

Over the past 3 years, Habitus has developed and collated the fundamental **strategic foundations** for Recovery Colleges based on evidence and best practices including: Principles for practice, competencies, mentorship frameworks, recruitment strategy, communication strategy, facilitation guides/supports and peer support practice guides. This includes developing a framework to assess principles and competencies scaling to new rural and urban sites, and outlining delivery models and a **framework to assess fidelity** to the Recovery College model and principles.





Peer Support Practice

Peer support is widely recognised as a key element to the success of Recovery Colleges. Research and emerging best-practice shows that fundamental peer support training, and ongoing mentorship for peer support workers ensures both quality peer practice and service delivery. As such we have an **extensive evidence base** on this key area, and have developed competencies for program implementation teams to utilise for peer support worker recruitment. In addition to this, we have built a **national framework of Peer Mentorship** for both community-based organisations and health regions (i.e. NHS).

Evaluation and impact assessment

Habitus has created and implemented developmental, process, and summative evaluation strategies for the School of Peer Support and Recovery College in all sites. We have created a comprehensive multi-site framework to assess Recovery College impact and developed a **comprehensive evaluation strategy for its scaling**. As part of this work we have assessed and evaluated outcomes of multiple peer initiatives: including the School of Peer Support, Recovery Colleges, and Peer Support Hubs (Welcome Centres). This has led to the creation of both **quantitative and qualitative measures** for evaluation including innovative methodologies that explore **user experience, systems impacts, and community shifts** which are of particular interest to Government and community funders.

Data management and analysis

Habitus' key skill lies in our ability to manage large volumes of data and provide analysis and insights. Through our scaling project, we have **streamlined multiple site data collection and reporting** using various database software systems taking into account different local site data management capabilities. This has included the creation and maintenance of **quantitative databases for statistical analysis**, developing **collective impact indicators** across sites in Canada, and supporting sites with outcome tool roll out, and annual multi-site reporting templates.

Research

Over the course of the past 3 years, we have developed academic partnerships to explore in-depth systems impacts of Recovery College in Canada and are in the process of publishing and presenting findings in academic and grey literature.

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