**COMMUNITY PARTNER DESCRIPTION*:**

The 7th Step Society of Nova Scotia is the local chapter of a national group, with memberships across Canada. It is a non-profit organization that provides group-based peer support to justice-involved men and women who are working to maintain their freedom, specifically from crime and incarceration. The group consists of ex-offenders and non-offender volunteers (e.g., professionals, students, community members). In Nova Scotia, programs are provided in the community (e.g., Halifax) and in institutions (e.g., Central Nova Correctional Centre, Nova Institution for Women). The Halifax group meets once a week on Tuesday nights. Beyond these meetings, 7th Step also provides school and professional presentations throughout the year, which provides ex-offenders with the opportunity to give back to their community by sharing their personal stories with others.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

This project will engage the 7th Step membership in research as co-researchers. The objective is to co-design and implement a study that addresses a relevant and important question or issue for the group. A research team consisting of 7th Step members will be established. Afterwards, the research priority will be identified by the team. Potential areas of inquiry include: (a) the effect of school presentations on presenters and audience members, (b) how 7th Step members apply the 7 steps in their daily lives, (c) how the needs of ex-offenders are being met by 7th Step and other complementary programs/ services, or (d) the effectiveness of 7th Step in achieving its objectives. After deciding on a research topic, the team will co-design and implement the research, which will include supporting community-based peer researchers to gather, analyze, and interpret the data.

**PROJECTED BENEFITS:**

Having the resources and support to engage in research will help the organization learn about itself, which will be useful for systematically identifying areas of strength as well as areas in need of improvement. Engaging the 7th Step members in participatory research will help build cohesion among the membership, and will further the organization's goal of providing ex-offenders with opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their community—this process of giving-back is a key factor in helping people stay away from crime and imprisonment.

* [These are excerpts from the Community Partner's original proposal]